This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

BX
9315
.S56
1809

T537

THE

WORKS

OF THE REVEREND

RICHARD SIBBS, D.D.

LATE MASTER OF CATHARINE-HALL,

IN THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD;

AND

PREACHER OF GRAY's INN, LONDON.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A SHORT MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR's LIFE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

ABERDEEN:
Printed by J. Chalmers & Co.
FOR R. OGLE, HOLBORN; AND T. HAMILTON, PATERNOSTER-ROW, LONDON.

1809.

CONTENTS OF VOLUME III.

PAGE

I.—BOWELS OPENED; or, A DISCOVERY of the NEAR and DEAR LOVE, UNION and COMMUNION, betwixt CHRIST and his CHURCH; and consequently, betwixt him and every believing Soul; in several Sermons, on the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Chapters of Canticles. — — — — — — — 1

II.—A FOUNTAIN SEALED; or, The DUTY of the SEALED to the SPIRIT, and the WORK of the SPIRIT in SEALING, being the substance of several Sermons from Eph. iv. 30.—*"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."* — — — — — — — — 281

III.—The CHURCH's COMPLAINT and CONFIDENCE, in Three Sermons, from Isaiah lxiv. 6, 7, 8.—*"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away."* 344

IV. ST. PAUL's CHALLENGE; a Sermon, from Rom. viii. 30.—*"What then shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"* — — — — — — — 371

V.—The CHURCH's ECHO; a Sermon, from Rev. xxii. 17.—*"And the Spirit, and the Bride, say, Come."* — — — 389

VI.—The SPIRITUAL MAN's AIM; guiding a Christian in his Affections and Actions, through sundry passages of this life; from 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31.—*"It remaineth, brethren, the time is short, let those that have wives, be as if they had none," &c.* — — 404

VII.—The CHRISTIAN's PORTION; wherein is unfolded the unsearchable Riches he hath by his interest in Christ; from 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23.—*"Let no man glory in man, for all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."* — — — — — — 430

VIII.—DAVID's CONCLUSION; or, The SAINT's RESOLUTION; a Sermon, from Psalm lxxiii. 28.—*"But it is good for me to draw near to God."* — — — — — — — 447

BOWELS OPENED;

OR,

A DISCOVERY of the NEAR and DEAR LOVE, UNION and COMMUNION, betwixt Christ and his Church;

AND CONSEQUENTLY,

BETWIXT HIM AND EVERY BELIEVING SOUL.

IN

SEVERAL SERMONS,

ON THE

FOURTH, FIFTH, and SIXTH CHAPTERS of CANTICLES.

SERMON I.

CANTICLES v. 1.

"*I have come into my garden, my ſiſter, my ſpouſe; I have eaten "my honeycomb with my honey; I have drank my wine with my "milk: Eat, O friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved!*

OTHER books of Solomon lie more obvious and open to common underſtanding; but as none entered into the holy of holies, but the high prieſt, ſo none can enter into the myſtery of this Song of Songs, but ſuch as have more near communion with Chriſt. Songs, and eſpecially marriage-ſongs, ſerve to expreſs mens own joys, and others praiſes. So this book contains the mutual joys, and mutual praiſes, betwixt Chriſt and his church.

And as Chriſt and his church are the greateſt perſons that partake of human nature, ſo whatſoever is excellent in the whole

world, is borrowed to ſet out the excellencies of theſe two great lovers.

It is called Solomon's Song, who, next unto Chriſt, was the greateſt ſon of wiſdom that ever the church bred; whoſe underſtanding, as it was large as the ſand of the ſea, ſo his affections, eſpecially that of love, was as large; as we may ſee by his many wives, and by the delight he ſought to take in whatſoever nature could afford. Which affection of love in him miſplaced, had been his undoing, but that he was one beloved of God; who, by his ſpirit, raiſed his ſoul to lovely objects of a higher nature. Here, in this argument, there is no danger for the deepeſt wit, or the largeſt affection (yea of a Solomon) to overreach; for the knowledge of Chriſt to his church, is above all knowledge—Epheſ. iii. 19. The angels themſelves may admire it, though they cannot comprehend it. It may well therefore be called the Song of Solomon; the moſt excellent ſong of a man of the higheſt conceit and deepeſt apprehenſion, and on the higheſt matters—the intercourſe betwixt Chriſt, the higheſt Lord of Lords, and his beſt beloved contracted ſpouſe.

There are divers things in this Song, that a corrupt heart, (unto which all things are defiled), may take offence at; but to the pure all things are pure. Such a ſinful abuſe of this heavenly book is far from the intention of the Holy Ghoſt in it; which is, by ſtooping low to us, to take advantage to raiſe us higher unto him; that by taking advantage of the ſweeteſt paſſage of our life (marriage), and the moſt delightful affection (love), in the ſweeteſt manner of expreſſion (by a ſong), he might carry up the ſoul to things of a heavenly nature. We ſee in ſummer, that one heat weakens another; and a great light, being near a little one, draws away and obſcures the flame of the other: ſo it is when the affections are taken up higher to their fit object, they die unto all earthly things, whilſt that heavenly flame conſumes and waſtes all baſe affections and earthly deſires. Amongſt other ways of mortification, there are two remarkable:

1. By embittering all earthly things unto us, whereby the affections are deadened to them.

2. By ſhewing more noble, excellent, and fit objects.

That the ſoul, iſſuing more largely and ſtrongly into them, may be diverted, and ſo by degrees die unto other things; the holy ſpirit hath choſen this way in this Song; by elevating and raiſing

raiſing our affections and love, to take it off from other things, that ſo it might run in its right channel. It is a pity that a ſweet ſtream ſhould not rather run into a garden, than into a puddle. What a pity is it that man, having in him ſuch excellent affections, as love, joy, and delight, ſhould cleave to dirty baſe things that are worſe than himſelf, ſo becoming debaſed like them? Therefore, the ſpirit of God, out of mercy and pity to man, would raiſe up his affections, by taking compariſon from earthly things, leading to higher matters, that only deſerve love, joy, delight, and admiration. Let God's ſtooping to us, occaſion our riſing up unto him; for here, the greateſt things—the myſtery of myſteries, the communion between Chriſt and his church, is ſet out in the familiar compariſon of a marriage, that ſo we might the better ſee it in the glaſs of compariſon, which we cannot ſo directly conceive of, as we may ſee the ſun in the water, whoſe beams we cannot ſo directly look upon. Only our care muſt be, not to look ſo much on the colours as on the picture; and not ſo much on the picture, as on the perſon itſelf repreſented; that we look not ſo much to the reſemblance, as to the perſon reſembled.

Some would have Solomon, by a ſpirit of prophecy, to take here a view of all the time, from his age, to the ſecond coming of Chriſt; and, in this Song, as in an abridgement, to ſet down the ſeveral paſſages and periods of the church, in ſeveral ages, as containing divers things which are more correſpondent to one age of the church than another. But howſoever this ſong may contain (we deny not) a ſtory of the church in ſeveral ages; yet this hinders not, but that moſt paſſages of it agree to the ſpiritual ſtate of the church in every age, as moſt interpreters have thought. In this Song, there is,

1. A ſtrong deſire of the church, of nearer communion with Chriſt; and then,

2. Some declining again in affection.

3. After this we have her recovery and regaining again of love; after which,

4. The church falls again into a declining of affection, whereupon follows a further ſtrangeneſs of Chriſt to her than before; which continues until,

5. That the church perceiving of Chriſt's conſtant affection

unto her, notwithſtanding her unkind dealing, recovers and cleaves faſter to Chriſt, than ever before—chap. iii.

Theſe paſſages agree to the experience of the beſt Chriſtians in the ſtate of their own lives. This obſervation muſt carry ſtrength through this whole Song, That there is the ſame regard of the whole church, and of every particular member, in regard of the chiefeſt privileges that accompany ſalvation. There is the ſame reaſon of every drop of water, as of the whole ocean—all is water; and of every ſpark of fire, as of the whole element of fire—all is fire; of thoſe homogeneal bodies, as we call them, there is the ſame reſpect of the part, and of the whole. And therefore, as the whole church is the ſpouſe of Chriſt, ſo is every particular chriſtian; and as the whole church deſires ſtill nearer communion with Chriſt, ſo doth every particular member. But to come to the words:

I am come into my garden, &c.

The chapter is not ſo well broken and divided from the former as it might have been; for it were better and more conſequent, that the laſt verſe of the former chapter were added to the beginning of this.

Cant. iv. 16.—"Awake, O north wind, and come, thou ſouth, blow upon my garden, that the ſpices thereof may flow out; let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleaſant fruits."

And therefore, by reaſon of the connexion of this chapter with the former verſe, we will firſt ſpeak ſomewhat of it briefly, only to make way for that which follows. The words contain,

1. A turning of Chriſt's ſpeech to the winds to blow upon his garden: with the end, why? "That the ſpices thereof may flow out."

2. We have an invitation of Chriſt, by the church, to come unto his garden, with the end, "To eat his pleaſant fruits."

It may be a queſtion, Whether this command be the words of Chriſt, or the deſire of his ſpouſe?

Anſw.—The words are ſpoken by Chriſt, becauſe he calls it "my garden;" and the church after invites him to eat of "his pleaſant fruits," not of hers; yet the words may be likewiſe an

an anſwer to a former ſecret deſire of the church; whereof the order is this. The church being ſenſible of ſome deadneſs of ſpirit, ſecretly deſires ſome further quickening. Chriſt then anſwers thoſe deſires, by commanding the winds to blow upon her. For, ordinarily, Chriſt firſt ſtirs up deſires; and then, anſwers the deſires of his own ſpirit, by further increaſe, as here—

Awake, thou north wind, and come, thou ſouth, and blow upon my garden, &c.

For the firſt point named, we ſee here, that Chriſt ſends forth his ſpirit, with command to all means, under the name of north and ſouth wind, to further the fruitfulneſs of his church. The wind is nature's fan; what winds are to the garden, that the ſpirit of Chriſt, in the uſe of means, is to the ſoul. From a compariſon fetched from Chriſt's commanding the winds, we may in general obſerve, That all creatures ſtand in obedience to Chriſt, as ready at a word, whenever he ſpeaks to them.—They are all as it were aſleep, until he wakes them. He can call for the wind out of his treaſures, when he pleaſes—he holds them in his hand.

Uſe 1.—This may comfort all thoſe that are Chriſt's, that they are under one that hath all creatures at his beck, under him, to do them ſervice, and at his check to do them no harm. This drew the diſciples, in admiration, to ſay, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the ſeas obey him?" And cannot the ſame power ſtill the waves and winds of churches and ſtates; and cauſe a ſudden calm, if, as the diſciples, we awake him with our prayers?

Secondly, We ſee here that Chriſt ſpeaks to winds contrary one to another; both in regard of the coaſts from whence they blow, and in their quality; but both agree in this, that both are neceſſary for the garden: where we ſee, that the courſes which Chriſt takes, and the means which he uſes with his church, may ſeem contrary; but, by a wiſe ordering, all agree in the wholeſome iſſue. A proſperous and afflicted condition are contrary, a mild and a ſharp courſe may ſeem to croſs one another; yet, ſweetly they agree in this, that, as the church needeth both, ſo Chriſt uſes both for the church's good. The north is a nipping wind, and the ſouth a cheriſhing wind; therefore the ſouth wind is the moſt welcome, and ſweeter af-

ter the north wind hath blown. But howſoever, "all things are ours, Paul, Apollos, Cephas, things preſent and to come, life, death, &c. all things work together for good to us, being in Chriſt."

Uſe 2.—Hence it is, that the manifold wiſdom of Chriſt maketh uſe of ſuch variety of conditions; and hence it is, that the ſpirit of Chriſt is mild in ſome men's miniſteries, and ſharp in others. Nay, in the very ſame miniſter, as the ſtate of the ſouls they have to deal with requires.

2. Sometimes again, the people of God need purging, and ſometimes refreſhing, whereupon the ſpirit of God carries itſelf ſuitably to both conditions, and the ſpirit in the godly themſelves draws good out of every condition; ſure they are that all winds blow them good; and, were it not for their good, no winds ſhould blow upon them. But, in regard that theſe times of ours, by long peace and plenty, grow cold, heavy, and ſecure, we need all kinds of winds to blow upon us, and all little enough. Time was, when we were more quick and lively; but now the heat of our ſpirits is abated; we muſt therefore take heed of it, and "quicken thoſe things that are ready to die;" Rev. iii. 2. or elſe, inſtead of the north and ſouth wind, God will ſend an eaſt wind that will dry up all, as it is in Hoſ. xiii. 15.

3. Again, if Chriſt can raiſe or lay, bind up or let looſe, all kind of winds at his pleaſure, then if means be wanting or fruitleſs, it is he that ſaith to the clouds, Drop not, and to the winds, Blow not; therefore we muſt acknowledge him in want, or plenty of means. The ſpirit of Chriſt, in the uſe of means, is a free agent, ſometimes more ſtrongly, ſometimes more mildly, ſometimes not at all—no creatur hath theſe winds in a bag at command; and therefore it is wiſdom to yield to the gales of the ſpirit; though, in ſome other things, as Solomon obſerves, it may hinder to obſerve the winds, yet here it is neceſſary and profitable to obſerve the winds of the ſpirit.

Now, for the clear underſtanding of what we are to ſpeak of, let us obſerve,

1. Why the ſpirit of God, in the uſe of the means, is compared to wind. And then,

2. Why the church is compared to a garden—which ſhall be handled in the proper place.

But

But first for the wind.

1. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," as it is in John iii. 8.—So the spirit of God blows freely, and openeth the heart of some, and poureth grace plentifully in them.

2. The wind, especially the north wind, hath a cleansing force; so the spirit of God purgeth our hearts from dead works, to serve the living God, making us partakers of the divine nature. 2 Pet. i.

3. The wind disperseth, and scattereth clouds, and makes a serenity in the air.—So doth the spirit disperse such clouds, as corruption and satan raise up in the soul, that we may clearly see the face of God in Jesus Christ.

4. The wind hath a cooling and a tempering quality, and tempers the distempers of nature; as in some hot countries, there be yearly winds, which blow at certain times in summer, tempering the heat.—So the spirit of God allayeth the unnatural heats of the soul in fiery temptations, and bringeth it into good temper.

5. The word being subtle, searcheth into every corner and cranny.—So the spirit likewise is of a searching nature, and discerneth betwixt the joints and the marrow, betwixt the flesh and the spirit, &c. searching those hidden corruptions, that nature could never have found out.

6. The wind hath a cherishing and fructifying force.—So the spirit is a quickening and a cherishing spirit, and maketh the heart which is as a barren wilderness, to be fruitful.

7. The wind hath a conveying power of sweet smells in the air, to carry them from one to another.—So the spirit in the word conveyeth the seeds of grace and comfort from one to another; it draws out what sweetness is in the spirits of men, and makes them fragrant and delightful to others.

8. The wind again bears down all before it, beats down houses and trees; like the cedars in Lebanon, turns them up by the roots, and lays all flat.—So the spirit is mighty in operation, there is no standing before it: It brings down mountains, and every high thing that exalts itself, and lays them level; nay, the Roman and other mighty empires, could not stand before it.

For these respects, and the like, the blowing of the spirit is compared to wind. For which end, Christ here commands the winds to

Blow upon his Garden.

"To blow," &c.—See here the order, linking, and concatenation of things, one under another: To the prospering of a poor flower or plant, in a garden, not only soil is needful, but air and wind also, and the influence of heaven; and God commanding all, as here, the winds to "blow upon his garden:" To this end, as a wonderful mercy to his people, it is said, Hos. ii. 22. "And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Israel." As the creatures are from God, so the order and dependence of creatures one upon another: to teach us, not only what to pray for, but also what to pray fitly for. Not only to pray for the dew of heaven, but also for seasonable and cherishing winds. It is not the soil, but the season that makes fruitful, and that from seasonable winds and influences. So, in spiritual things, there is a chain of causes and effects: Prayer comes from faith, Rom. x. 14. faith from the hearing of the word, hearing from a preacher, by whom God, by his spirit, blows upon the heart, and a preacher, from God's sending. If the God of nature should but hinder or take away one link of nature's chain, the whole frame would be disturbed. Well, that which Christ commands here, is for the winds to "blow upon his garden."

And we need blowing, our spirits will be becalmed else, and stand at a stay; and satan will be sure by himself, and such as are his bellows, to blow up the seeds of sinful lusts in us. For, there are two spirits in the church, the one always blowing against the other. Therefore, the best had need to be stirred up; otherwise, with Moses, their hands will be ready to fall down, and abate in their affection. Therefore we need blowing,

1. In regard of our natural inability.

2. In regard of our dullness and heaviness cleaving to nature occasionally.

3. In regard of contrary winds from without, satan hath his bellows filled with his spirt, that hinders the work of grace all they

they can, ſo that we need not only Chriſt's blowing, but alſo his ſtopping other contrary winds, that they blow not, Rev. vii. 1.

4. In regard of the condition of the new covenant, wherein beginning, growth, and ending, is from grace, and nothing but grace.

5. Becauſe old grace, without a freſh ſupply, will not hold againſt new croſſes and temptations.

Uſe.—When Chriſt draws, let us run after him; when he blows, let us open unto him, it may be the laſt blaſt that ever we ſhall have from him. And let us ſet upon duties with this encouragement, that Chriſt will blow upon us, not only to prevent us, but alſo to maintain his own graces in us. But Oh! where is this ſtirring up of ourſelves and one another upon theſe grounds?

Queſt.—But why is the church compared to a garden?

Anſ.—Chriſt herein takes all manner of terms to expreſs himſelf, and the ſtate of the church as it is to him, to ſhew us that whereſoever we are, we may have occaſion of heavenly thoughts, to raiſe up our thoughts to higher matters. His church is his temple; when we are in the temple, it is a field when we are there; a garden, if we walk in a garden: it is alſo a ſpouſe, and a ſiſter, &c. but more particularly the church is reſembled to a garden;

1. Becauſe a garden is taken out of the common waſte ground, to be appropriated to a more particular uſe; ſo the church of Chriſt is taken out of the wilderneſs of this waſte world to a particular uſe. It is in reſpect of the reſt, as Goſhen to Egypt, wherein light was, when all elſe was darkneſs. And indeed wherein doth the church differ from other grounds, but that Chriſt hath taken it in? it is the ſame ſoil as other grounds are, but he dreſſeth and fits it to bear ſpices and herbs.

2. In a garden, nothing comes up naturally of itſelf, but as it is planted and ſet; ſo nothing is good in the heart, but as it is planted and ſet by the heavenly husbandman. We need not ſow the wilderneſs, for the ſeeds of weeds proſper naturally, the earth is a mother to weeds, but a ſtep-mother to herbs; ſo weeds and paſſions grow too rank naturally, but nothing grows in the church itſelf, but as it is ſet by the hand of Chriſt, who is the author, dreſſer, and pruner of his garden.

3. Again, in a garden, nothing uſes to be planted but what is uſeful and delightful; ſo there is no grace in the heart of a chriſtian but it is uſeful (as occaſion ſerves) both to God and man.

4. Further, in a garden there is variety of flowers and ſpices, eſpecially in thoſe hot countries; ſo in a chriſtian there is ſomewhat of every grace; as ſome cannot hear of a curious flower but they will have it in their garden, ſo a chriſtian cannot hear of any grace, but he labours to obtain it; they labour for graces for all ſeaſons and occaſions; they have, for proſperity, temperance and ſobriety; for adverſity, patience and hope to ſuſtain them; for thoſe who are above them, they have reſpect and obedience; and for thoſe under them, ſuitable uſage in all conditions of chriſtianity, for the ſpirit of God in them is a ſeminary of ſpiritual good things; as in the corruption of nature, before the ſpirit of God came to us, there was the ſeminary of all ill weeds in us; ſo when there is a new quality and new principles put in us, therewith come the ſeeds of all graces.

5. Again, of all other places, we moſt delight in our gardens to walk there, and take our pleaſure, and take care thereof, by fencing, weeding, watering, and planting; ſo Chriſt's chief care and delight is for his church; he walks in the midſt of the "ſeven golden candleſticks;" and if he defend and protect ſtates, it is that they may be a harbour to his church.

6. And then again, as in gardens they had wont to have fountains and ſtreams which run through their gardens; as Paradiſe had four ſtreams which ran through it, ſo the church is Chriſt's Paradiſe, and his ſpirit is a ſpring in the midſt of it, to refreſh the ſouls of his people upon all their faintings, and ſo the ſoul of a chriſtian becomes as a watered garden.

7. So alſo, their fountains were ſealed up; ſo the joys of the church and particular chriſtians are as it were ſealed up; "A ſtranger" (it is ſaid) "ſhall not meddle with this joy of the church."

8. Laſtly, a garden ſtands always in need of weeding and dreſſing; continual labour and coſt muſt be beſtowed upon it; ſometimes planting, pruning, and weeding, &c. ſo in the church and hearts of chriſtians, Chriſt hath always ſomewhat to do, we would elſe ſoon be overgrown and turn wild: in all which and the like reſpects, Chriſt calleth upon the winds to blow upon his garden.

Uſe

Uſe.—1. If then the church be a ſeparate portion, we ſhould walk as men of a ſeparate condition from the world, not as men of the world, but as chriſtians, to make good that we are ſo, by feeling the graces of God's ſpirit in ſome comfortable meaſure, that ſo Chriſt may have ſomething in us, that he may delight to dwell with us, ſo to be ſubject to his pruning and dreſſing. For it is ſo far from being an ill ſign that Chriſt is at coſt with us, in following us with affliction, that it is rather a ſure ſign of his love. For the care of this bleſſed husbandman is to prune us ſo, as to make us fruitful. Men care not for heath and wilderneſs, whereupon they beſtow no coſt: ſo when God prunes us by croſſes and afflictions, and ſows good ſeed in us, it is a ſign he means to dwell with us and delight in us.

2. And then alſo, we ſhould not ſtrive ſo much for common liberties of the world, which common people delight in, but for peculiar graces, that God may delight in us as his garden.

3. And then, let us learn hence not to deſpiſe any nation or perſon, ſeeing God can take out of the waſte wilderneſs whom he will, and make the deſart an Eden.

4. Again, let us bleſs God for ourſelves, that our lot hath fallen into ſuch a pleaſant place, to be planted in the church, the place of God's delight.

5. And this alſo ſhould move us to be fruitful, for men will endure a fruitleſs tree in the waſte wilderneſs, but in their gardens, who will endure it? dignity ſhould mind us of duty. It is ſtrange to be fruitleſs and barren in this place which we live in, being watered with the dew of heaven, under the ſweet influence of the means. This fruitleſs eſtate being often watered from heaven; how fearfully is it threatened by the Holy Ghoſt? that "It is near unto curſing and burning;" for in this caſe, viſible churches, if they proſper not, God will remove the hedge and lay them waſte, having a garden elſewhere. Sometimes God's plants proſper better in Babylon than in Judea: it is to be feared God may complain of us as he doth of his people, Jer. ii. 21. "I have planted thee a noble vine, how art thou then come to be degenerated?" If in this caſe we regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not regard the beſt thing that comes from us, as our prayers, Heb. xii. 11. Heb. xiii. We muſt then learn of himſelf how and wherein to pleaſe him. Obedience from a broken heart is the beſt ſacrifice. Mark in ſcripture what he abhors, what he delights in: we uſe to ſay of our friends,

Would

Would to God I knew how to pleaſe them: Chriſt teacheth us, that "without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe him:" Heb. xi. 6. Let us then ſtrive and labour to be fruitful in our places and callings; for it is the greateſt honour in this world for God to dignify us with ſuch a condition, as to make us fruitful: we muſt not bring forth fruit for ourſelves, as God complains of Ephraim, Hoſ. i. 10. Honour, riches, and the like, are but ſecondary things, arbitrary at God's pleaſure to caſt in; but, to have an active heart, fruitful from this ground, that God hath planted us for this purpoſe, that we may do good to mankind, this is an excellent conſideration not to profane our calling. The bleſſed man is ſaid to be a "tree planted by the water ſide, that brings forth fruit in due ſeaſon;" but it is not every fruit, not that fruit which Moſes complains of, Deut. xxxii. 31. "The wine of dragons, and the gall of aſps;" but good fruit, as John ſpeaks of, Mat. iii. 10. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and caſt into the fire."

6. Laſtly, in that the church is called Chriſt's garden, this may ſtrengthen our faith in God's care and protection. The church may ſeem to lie open to all incurſions, but it hath an inviſible hedge about it, a wall without it, and a wall within it: God himſelf is a wall of fire about it, Zach. ii. 3. and his ſpirit a well of living waters running through it, to refreſh and comfort it, Rev. xxii. As it was ſaid of Canaan, ſo it may be ſaid of the church; "The eye of the Lord is upon it all the year long," and he waters it continually. From which eſpecial care of God over it, this is a good plea for us to God, I am thine, ſave me; I am a plant of thine own ſetting, nothing is in me but what is thine, therefore cheriſh what is thine: ſo for the whole church, the plea is good, the church is thine, fence it, water it, defend it, keep the wild boar out of it. Therefore the enemies thereof ſhall one day know what it is to make a breach in God's vineyard. In the mean time let us labour to keep our hearts as a garden, that nothing that defileth may enter: in which reſpects the church is compared to a garden upon which Chriſt commands the North and South wind (all the means of grace) to blow.

But to what end muſt theſe winds blow upon the garden?

That the ſpices thereof may flow out.

The end of this blowing is you ſee, That the ſpices thereof may flow out. Good things in us lie dead and bound up, unleſs

leſs the ſpirit let them out: We ebb and flow, open and ſhut, as the ſpirit blows upon us; without blowing, no flowing. There were gracious good things in the church, but they wanted blowing up and further ſpreading; whence we may obſerve, That

We need not only grace to put life into us at the firſt, but likewiſe grace to quicken and draw forth that grace which we have. This is the difference betwixt man's blowing, and the ſpirit's; man when he blows, (if grace be not there before) ſpends all his labour upon a dead coal, which he cannot make take fire. But the ſpirit firſt kindles a holy fire, and then increaſes the flame. Chriſt had in the uſe of means, wrought on the church before, and now further promoteth his own work. We muſt firſt take in, and then ſend out; firſt be ciſterns to contain, and then conduits to convey. The wind firſt blows, and then the ſpices of the church flow out; we are firſt ſweet in ourſelves, and then ſweet to others.

Whence we ſee further, That it is not enough to be good in ourſelves, but our goodneſs muſt flow out, that is, grow more ſtrong, uſeful to continue, and ſtream forth for the good of others. We muſt labour to be (as was ſaid of John) burning and ſhining chriſtians; for Chriſt is not like a box of ointment, ſhut up and not opened, but like that box of ointment which Mary poured out, which perfumed the whole houſe with the ſweetneſs thereof: for the ſpirit is herein like wind, it carries the ſweet ſavour of grace to others. A chriſtian, as ſoon as he finds any rooting in God, is of a ſpreading diſpoſition, and makes the places he lives in the better for him. The whole body is the better for every good member, as we ſee in Oneſimus, Philem. x. The meaneſt perſons, when they become good, are uſeful and profitable; of briers, become flowers: the very naming of a good man caſts a ſweet ſavour, as preſenting ſome grace to the heart of the hearer: for, then we have what we have to purpoſe; when others have occaſion to bleſs God for us, for conveying comfort to them by us. And for our furtherance herein therefore, the winds are called upon to awake and blow upon Chriſt's garden.

That the ſpices thereof may flow out.

Hence we ſee alſo, That, where once God begins, he goes on, and delights to add encouragement to encouragement, to maintain new ſetters up in religion, and doth not only give them

a ſtock of grace at the beginning, but alſo helps them to trade.—He is not only Alpha, but Omega unto them, Rev. i. 8.; the beginning and the ending. He doth not only plant graces, but alſo watereth and cheriſheth them. Where the ſpirit of Chriſt is, it is an encouraging ſpirit; for not only it infuſeth grace, but alſo ſtirs it up, that we may be ready prepared for every good work, otherwiſe we cannot do that which we are able to do.—The ſpirit muſt bring all into exerciſe, elſe the habits of grace will lie aſleep. We need a preſent ſpirit to do every good; not only the power to will, but the will itſelf; and not only the will, but the deed is from the ſpirit. Which ſhould ſtir us up to go to Chriſt, that he may ſtir up his own graces in us, that they may flow out.

Uſe.—Let us labour then in ourſelves to be full of goodneſs, that ſo we may be fitted to do good to all: as God is good and does good to all, ſo muſt we ſtrive to be as like him as may be.—In which caſe, for others ſakes, we muſt pray, that God would make the winds to blow out fully upon us, that our ſpices may flow out for their good. For a chriſtian, in his right temper, thinks, that he hath nothing good to purpoſe, but that which does good to others. Thus far of Chriſt's command to the north and ſouth wind to awake and blow upon his garden, that the ſpices thereof may flow out. In the next place, we have,

2. Chriſt's invitation by the church is, come into his garden; with the end thereof—"to eat his pleaſant fruits."

Which words ſhew the church's further deſire of Chriſt's preſence to delight in the graces of his own ſpirit in her. She invites him to come and take delight in the graces of his own ſpirit. And ſhe calls him beloved, becauſe all her love is, or ſhould be, imparted and ſpent on Chriſt, who gave himſelf to a curſed death for her. Our love ſhould run in ſtrength no other way, therefore the Church calls Chriſt her beloved. Chriſt was there before, but ſhe deſires a further preſence of him; whence we may obſerve, That

Whereſoever grace is truly begun and ſtirred up, there is ſtill a further deſire of Chriſt's preſence, and approaching daily more and more near to the ſoul; the church never thinks him near enough to her, until ſhe be in heaven with him. The true ſpouſe and bride always (unleſs in deſertion and temptation) crieth,—"Come, Lord Jeſus, come quickly," Rev. xxii. 17. Now theſe degrees

degrees of Chriſt's approaches to the ſoul until his ſecond coming are, that he may manifeſt himſelf more and more in defending, comforting, and enabling his church with grace; every further manifeſtation of his preſence is a further coming.

But why is the church thus earneſt?

Firſt, becauſe grace helps us to ſee our need of Chriſt, and ſo helps us to prize him the more; which high eſteem breeds an hungering earneſt deſire after him, and a deſire of further likeneſs and ſuitableneſs to him.

Secondly, becauſe the church well knows, that when Chriſt comes to the ſoul, he comes not alone, but with his ſpirit, and his ſpirit with abundance of peace and comfort. Thus ſhe knows what need ſhe hath of his preſence, that without him there is no comfortable living: For whereſoever he is, he makes the ſoul a kind of heaven, and all conditions of life comfortable.

Uſe.—Hence we may ſee, that thoſe that do not deſire the preſence of Chriſt in his ordinances, are, it is to be feared, ſuch as the wind of the Holy Ghoſt never blew upon. There are ſome of ſuch a diſpoſition, as they cannot endure the preſence of Chriſt; ſuch as antichriſt and his limbs, whom the preſence of Chriſt, in his ordinances, blaſts and conſumes. Such are not only profane and worldly perſons, but proud hypocrites, who glory in ſomething of their own, and therefore their hearts riſe againſt Chriſt and his ordinances, as laying open, and ſhewing their emptineſs and carnality. The ſpirit in the ſpouſe is always ſaying to Chriſt, "Come." It hath never enough of him, he was now in a fort preſent: But the church (after it is once blown up) is not ſatisfied without a further preſence. It is from the ſpirit that we deſire more of the ſpirit, and from the preſence of Chriſt that we deſire a further preſence and communion with him.

Now, the end and reaſon why Chriſt is deſired by the church to come into his garden, is, "to eat his pleaſant fruits;" that is, to give him contentment. And is it not fit that Chriſt ſhould eat the fruit of his own vine, have comfort of his own garden, to taſte of his own fruits?—The only delight Chriſt hath in the world, is in his garden; and that he might take the more delight in it, he makes it fruitful; and thoſe fruits are precious fruits, as growing from plants ſet by his own hand, reliſhing of his own ſpirit, and ſo fitted for his taſte. Now the church knowing

ing what fitted Chriſt's taſte beſt, and knowing the fruits of grace in her heart, deſired that Chriſt would delight in his own graces in her, and kindly accept of what ſhe preſented him with.—Whence we ſee, That

A gracious heart is privy to its own grace and ſincerity, when it is in a right temper; and ſo far as it is privy, is bold with Chriſt in a ſweet and reverend manner. So much ſincerity, ſo much confidence. If our heart condemn us not of inſincerity, we may, in a reverend manner, ſpeak boldly to Chriſt. It is not fit there ſhould be ſtrangeneſs between Chriſt and his ſpouſe; neither indeed will there be, when Chriſt hath blown upon her, and when ſhe is on the growing hand. But mark the order.

Firſt, Chriſt blows, and then the church ſays, "Come:"—Chriſt begins in love, then love draws love; Chriſt draws the church, and ſhe runs after him. Cant. i. 14. The fire of love melts more than the fire of affliction.

Again, we may ſee here in the church a carefulneſs to pleaſe Chriſt; as it is the duty, ſo it is the diſpoſition of the church of Chriſt to pleaſe her huſband.

The reaſon is, firſt, our happineſs ſtands in his contentment, and all cannot but be well in that houſe where the huſband and the wife delight in, and make much of each other.

And again, after that the church hath denied herſelf, and the vanities of the world, entering into a way and courſe of mortification, whom elſe hath ſhe to give herſelf to, or receive contentment from? Our manner is to ſtudy to pleaſe men whom we hope to riſe by, being careful that all we do may be well taken of them; as for Chriſt, we put him off with any thing: If he likes, it, ſo it is; if not, it is the beſt that he is like to have.

O let us take the apoſtle's counſel, Col. i. 9. "To labour to walk worthy of the Lord," &c. unto all well-pleaſing; increaſing in knowledge and fruitfulneſs, in every good work. And this knowledge muſt not only be a general wiſdom in knowing truths, but a ſpecial underſtanding of his good will to us, and our ſpecial duties again to him.

Again, that we may pleaſe Chriſt the better, labour to be cleanſed from that which is offenſive to him; let the ſpring be clean. Therefore the pſalmiſt, deſiring that the words of his mouth and the meditations of his heart might be acceptable before God, firſt begs cleanſing from his ſecret ſins, Pſal. xix. 12.

And

And ſtill we muſt remember, that he himſelf muſt work in us whatſoever is well-pleaſing in his ſight, that ſo we may be perfect in every good thing to do his will, having grace whereby we may ſerve him acceptably. And one prevailing argument with him is, that we deſire to be ſuch as he may delight in; the upright are his delight. It cannot but pleaſe him when we deſire grace, for this end that we may pleaſe him. If we ſtudy to pleaſe men in whom there is but little good, ſhould we not much more ſtudy to pleaſe Chriſt, the fountain of goodneſs? Labour, therefore, to be ſpiritual; for "to be carnally minded is death," Rom. viii. 6. and "thoſe that are in the fleſh cannot pleaſe God."

The church deſires Chriſt to come into his garden to eat his pleaſant fruits. Where we ſee, the church gives all to Chriſt.—The garden is his, the fruit his, the pleaſantneſs and preciouſneſs of the fruit is his. And as the fruits pleaſe him, ſo the humble acknowledgement that they come from him, doth exceedingly pleaſe him. It is enough for us to have the comfort, let him have the glory. It came from a good ſpirit in David, when he ſaid, "Of thine own, Lord, I give thee," &c. God accounts the works and fruits that come from us to be ours, becauſe the judgement and reſolution of will, whereby we do them, is ours. This he doth to encourage us; but becauſe the grace whereby we judge and will aright, comes from God, it is our duty to aſcribe whatſoever is good in us, or comes from us, unto him: ſo God ſhall loſe no praiſe, and we loſe no encouragement. The imperfections in well-doing are only ours, and thoſe Chriſt will pardon, as knowing how to bear with the infirmities of his ſpouſe, being the weaker veſſel.

Uſe.—This, therefore, ſhould cheer up our ſpirits in the wants and blemiſhes of our performances. They are, notwithſtanding, precious fruits in Chriſt's acceptance, ſo that we deſire to pleaſe him above all things, and to have nearer communion with him: fruitfulneſs unto pleaſingneſs may ſtand with imperfections, ſo that we be ſenſible of them, and aſhamed for them.—Although the fruit be little, yet it is precious, there is a bleſſing in it. Imperfections help us againſt temptations to pride, not to be matter of diſcouragement, which ſatan aims at. And as Chriſt commands the north and ſouth wind to blow for cheriſhing; ſo ſatan labours to ſtir up an eaſt pinching wind, to take either from our endeavour, or to make us heartleſs in endeavour. Why ſhould we think baſely of that which Chriſt thinks precious? Why

ſhould we think that offenſive, which he counts as incenſe? We muſt not give falſe witneſs of the work of grace in our hearts, but bleſs God that he will work any thing in ſuch polluted hearts as ours. What though, as they come from us, they have a reliſh of the old man, feeling he takes them from us, and perfumes them with his own ſweet odours, Rev. viii. 3.; ſo preſents them unto God? He is our high-prieſt, which makes all acceptable, both perſons, prayers and performances, ſprinkling them all with his blood, Heb. ix. 13.

To conclude this point, let it be our ſtudy to be in ſuch a condition wherein we may pleaſe Chriſt; and whereas we are daily prone to offend him, let us daily renew our covenant with him, and in him; and fetch encouragements of well-doing from this, that what we do is not only well-pleaſing unto him, but rewarded of him. And to this end deſire him, that he would give command to north and ſouth, to all ſort of means, to be effectual for making us more fruitful, that he may delight in us as his pleaſant gardens; and then what is in the world that we need much care for, or fear?

Now, upon the church's invitation for Chriſt to come into his garden, follows his gracious anſwer unto the church's deſire, in the firſt verſe of this fifth chapter.

Cant. v. 1.—"I am come into my garden, my ſiſter, my ſpouſe; I have gathered my myrrh with my ſpice; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey; I have drank my wine with my milk: eat, O friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved."

Which words contain in them an anſwer to the deſire of the church, in the latter part of the verſe formerly handled: "Awake, thou north wind, and come, thou ſouth," &c.

Then (verſe 2) is ſet forth the ſecure eſtate of the church at this time, "I ſleep, but my heart waketh," in ſetting down whereof, the Holy Ghoſt here, by Solomon, ſhews likewiſe, the loving intercourſe betwixt Chriſt and the church one with another.

Now Chriſt, upon the ſecure eſtate and condition of the church, deſires her to open unto him (verſe 2) Which deſire and waiting of Chriſt is put off and ſlighted with poor and ſlender excuſes; (verſe 3.) "I have put off my coat, how ſhall I put it on," &c.

The ſucceſs of which excuſes is, that Chriſt ſeems to go away from her, and indeed to her ſight and ſenſe departs; (verſe 6.)

"I

"I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself," &c. Whereupon she lays about her, is restless, and enquires after Christ from the watchmen, who misuse, "wound her, and take away her vail from her," (verse 7.)

Another intercourse in this chapter here is, that the church, for all this, gives not over searching after Christ; but asks the daughters of Jerusalem what was become of her beloved, (ver. 8.) and withal, in a few words, but full of large expression, she relates her case unto them, that she was sick of love; and so chargeth them to tell her beloved, if they find him. Whereupon a question is moved by them, touching her beloved; ver. 9. "What is thy beloved more than another beloved? She takes occasion, being full of love, which is glad of all occasions to speak of her beloved, to burst forth into his praises, by many elegant expressions, ver. 10, 11, 12, &c.

1. In general, setting him at a large distance, beyond comparison from all others, to be "the chiefest of ten thousand," ver. 10. 2. In particular, ver. 11. &c. "His head is as most fine gold," &c.

The issue whereof was, that the daughters of Jerusalem became likewise enamoured with him, chap. vi. 1. and thereupon, also enquire after him—"Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women," &c. Unto which demand the church makes answer, chap. vi. 2. and so ver. 3. of that chapter, makes a confident triumphant close unto all these grand passages forenamed—"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine," &c. all which will better appear in the particulars themselves.

The first thing, then, which offereth itself to our consideration is, Christ's answer to the church's invitation—chap. iv. 16.

I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh, with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drank my wine with my milk: Eat, O friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved.

In which verse we have, 1. Christ's answer to the church's petition—"I am come into my garden." 2. An appellation, or description of the church—"My sister, my spouse." 3. Christ's acceptation of what he had gotten there—"I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey." 4. There is an invitation of all Christ's friends, to

a magnificent abundant feaſt—Eat, O friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved."

For the firſt, then, in that Chriſt makes ſuch a real anſwer to the church's invitation, "I am come into my garden," &c. We ſee that Chriſt comes into his garden. It is much that he who hath heaven to delight in, will delight to dwell among the ſons of ſinful men. But this he doth for us, and ſo takes notice of the church's petition.

"Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleaſant fruit." The right ſpeech of the church that gives all to Chriſt, who, when ſhe hath made ſuch a petition, hears it. The order is this,

Firſt of all, God makes his church lovely, planteth good things therein, and then ſtirs up in her good deſires; both fitneſs to pray from an inward gracious diſpoſition, and holy deſires: after which, Chriſt hearing the voice of his own ſpirit in her, and regarding his own preparations, he anſwers them graciouſly. Whence, in the firſt place, we may obſerve, that,

God makes us good, ſtirs up holy deſires in us, and then anſwers the deſires of his holy ſpirit in us.

A notable place we have for this, Pſal. x. 17. which ſhews how God firſt prepares the heart to pray, and then hears theſe deſires of the ſoul ſtirred up by his own ſpirit, "Lord, thou haſt heard the deſires of the humble;" none are fit to pray but the humble, ſuch as diſcern their own wants: "Thou wilt prepare their hearts, thou wilt make thine ear to hear." So Rom. viii. 26. it is ſaid, "Likewiſe the ſpirit alſo helpeth our infirmities; for, we know not what to pray for as we ought; but the ſpirit itſelf maketh interceſſion for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." Thus, the ſpirit not only ſtirs up our heart to pray, but alſo prepares our hearts unto it. Eſpecially, this is neceſſary for us, when our thoughts are confuſed with trouble, grief and paſſions, not knowing what to pray for. In this caſe, the ſpirit dictates the word of prayer, or elſe, in a confuſion of thoughts, ſums up all in a volley of ſighs and inexpreſſible groans. Thus, it is true, that our hearts can neither be lifted up to prayer, nor rightly prepared for it, in any proper frame, but by God's own ſpirit. Nothing is accepted of God toward heaven and happineſs, but that which is ſpiritual; all ſaving and ſanctifying good comes from above. Therefore God muſt

muſt prepare the heart, ſtir up holy deſires, dictate prayer; muſt do all in all, being our Alpha and Omega.

Now, God hears our prayers: Firſt, becauſe the materials of theſe holy deſires are good in themſelves, and from the perſon from whence they come, his beloved ſpouſe, as it is Cant. ii. 14. where Chriſt deſiring to hear the voice of his church, ſaith, "Let me ſee thy countenance, and let me hear thy voice; for ſweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." Thus the voice of the ſpouſe is ſweet, becauſe it is ſtirred up by his own ſpirit, which burns the incenſe, and whence all comes which is ſavingly good. This offering up of our prayers, in the name of Chriſt, is that which, with his ſweet odours, perfumes all our ſacrifices and prayers; becauſe, being in the covenant of grace, God reſpects whatſoever comes from us, as we do the deſires of our near friends.

2. And then again, God hears our prayers, becauſe he looks upon us as we are in the election and choice of God the Father, who hath given us to him. Not only as in the near bond of marriage, huſband and wife, but alſo as he hath given us to Chriſt, which is his plea unto the Father: John xvii. 16. "Thine they were, thou gaveſt them to me," &c. The deſires of the church pleaſe him, becauſe they are ſtirred up by his ſpirit, and proceed from her that is his; whoſe voice he delights to hear; and the prayers of others for his church are accepted, becauſe they are for her that is beloved.

To confirm this further, ſee Iſa. lviii. 9. "Then thou ſhalt cry, and the Lord ſhall anſwer; thou ſhalt call, and preſently he ſhall ſay, Here I am," &c ſo as ſoon as Daniel had ended that excellent prayer, the angel telleth him, "At the beginning of thy ſupplications, the decree came forth," &c. Dan. ix. 19. So becauſe he knows what to put into our hearts, he knows our deſires and thoughts; and therefore accepts of our prayers and hears us; becauſe he loves the voice of his own ſpirit in us. So it is ſaid, "He fulfils the deſires of thoſe that fear him, and he is near to thoſe that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth." Pſal. cxlv. 18. And our Saviour ſaith, "Aſk and ye ſhall receive," &c. So we have it, 1 John v. xiv. "And we know, if we aſk any thing according to his will, he heareth us."

Uſe 1.—Let it therefore be a ſingular comfort to us, that in all wants, ſo in that of friends, when we have none to go to,

yet we have God, to whom we may freely pour out our hearts, there being no place in the world that can reſtrain us from his preſence, or his ſpirit from us; he can hear us and help us in all places. What a bleſſed eſtate is this? None can hinder us from driving this trade with Chriſt in heaven.

Uſe 2.—And let us make another uſe of it likewiſe, to be a means to ſtir up our hearts to make uſe of our privileges. What a prerogative is it for a favourite to have the ear of his prince? him we account happy: ſurely he is much more happy, that hath God's ear—him to be his Father in the covenant; him reconciled on all occaſions to pour out his heart before him; who is merciful and faithful, wiſe, and moſt able to help us. Why are we diſcouraged therefore? and why are we caſt down? when we have ſuch a powerful and ſuch a gracious God to go to in all our extremities. He that can pray, can never be very uncomfortable.

Uſe 3.—So likewiſe, it ſhould ſtir us up to keep our peace with God, that ſo we may always have acceſs unto him, and communion with him. What a pitiable caſe is it to loſe other comforts, and therewith alſo to be in ſuch a ſtate that we cannot go to God with any boldneſs? It is the greateſt loſs of all, when we have loſt the ſpirit of prayer. For, if we loſe other things, we may recover them by prayer. But when we have loſt this boldneſs to go to God, and are afraid to look him in the face, (as malefactors the judge), this is a woful eſtate.

Now there are many caſes wherein the ſoul is not in a ſtate fit for prayer. As 1. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not regard my prayer." If a man hath a naughty heart, that purpoſeth to live in any ſin againſt God, he takes him for an enemy, and therefore will not regard his prayer. Therefore, we muſt come with a reſolute purpoſe, to break off all ſinful courſes, and to give up ourſelves to the guidance of God's ſpirit. And this will be a forcible reaſon to move us thereunto, becauſe ſo long as we live in any known ſin unrepented of, God neither regards us nor our prayers. What a fearful eſtate is this, that when we have ſuch need of God's favour in all eſtates; in ſickneſs, the hour of death, and in ſpiritual temptation, to be in ſuch a condition, as that we dare not go on to God? Though our lives be civil, yet if we have falſe hearts that feed themſelves with evil imaginations, and with a purpoſe of ſinning, (though we act not), the Lord will not regard

gard the prayers of ſuch a one, they are abominable—" The very ſacrifice of the wicked is abominable." Prov. xiii.

2. Another caſe is, When we will not forgive others. We know it is directly ſet down in the Lord's prayer: " Forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us;" and there is further added, ver. 15. " If you forgive not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." If our hearts tell us we have no diſpoſition to pardon, be at peace and agreement, then we do but take God's name in vain, when we aſk him to forgive our ſins, when we continue in envy and malice. In this caſe, God will not regard our prayers; as it is ſaid, I care not for your prayers, or for any ſervice you perform to me: Why? " For your hands are full of blood:" you are unmerciful, of a cruel fierce diſpoſition, which cannot appear before God rightly, nor humble itſelf in prayer. If it doth, its own bloody and cruel diſpoſition will be objected againſt the prayers, which are not mingled with faith and love, but with wrath and bitterneſs. Shall I look for mercy, who have no merciful heart myſelf? Can I hope to find that from God, which others cannot find from me? An unbroken diſpoſition, which counts pride an ornament, that is cruel and fierce, it cannot go to God in prayer: For whoſoever would prevail with God in prayer, muſt be humble; for our ſupplications muſt come from a loving peaceable diſpoſition, where there is a reſolution againſt all ſin. Neither is it ſufficient to avoid grudging and malice againſt theſe; but we muſt look that others have not cauſe to grudge againſt us; as it is commanded, Mat. v. 23. " If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembereſt that thy brother hath ought againſt thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; firſt be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." So that if we do not ſeek reconciliation with men unto whom we have done wrong, God will not be reconciled to us, nor accept any ſervice from us.

If then we would have our prayers, and our perſons accepted, or reſpected, let us make conſcience of that which hath been ſaid, and not loſe ſuch a bleſſed privilege as this is, that God may regard our prayers. But here may be aſked,

How ſhall I know whether God regards my prayers or not?

Anſw.—1. When he grants the thing prayed for, or enlargeth our hearts to pray ſtill. It is a greater gift than the thing

itſelf we beg, to have a ſpirit of prayer with a heart enlarged. For as long as the heart is enlarged to prayer, it is a ſign that he hath a ſpecial regard of us, and will grant our petitions in the beſt and fitteſt time.

2. When he anſwers us in a better and higher kind; as Paul, when he prayed for the taking away the thorn in the fleſh, had promiſes of ſufficient grace.

3. When again, he gives us inward peace, though he gives not the thing. As Phil. iv. 7. "In nothing be careful, but in all things let your requeſts be made to God, with prayer and thankſgiving."

Queſt.—But ſometimes he doth not anſwer our requeſts.

Anſ.—It is true he doth not: but the peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding, keeps our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God. So, though he anſwers not our prayers in particular, yet he vouchſafes inward peace unto us, aſſuring us, that it ſhall go well with us, though not in that particular we beg. And thus, in not hearing their prayers, yet they have their hearts deſire, when God's will is made known. Is not this ſufficient for a chriſtian, either to have the thing, or to have inward peace, with aſſurance that it ſhall go better with them than if they had it, with a ſpirit enlarged to pray, till they have the thing prayed for? If any of theſe be, God reſpects our prayers.

Again, in that Chriſt is thus ready to come unto his garden, upon the church's invitation, we may further obſerve, that

Chriſt vouchſafes his gracious preſence to his children, upon their deſire of it.

The point is clear—from the beginning of the world, the church hath had the preſence of Chriſt always: For, either he hath been preſent in ſacrifices, or in ſome other things, ſigns of his preſence—as in the buſh, or ſome more glorious manifeſtation of his preſence—the ark, and in the cloud and pillar of fire; and after that, more gloriouſly in the temple. He hath ever been preſent with his church in ſome ſign or evidence of his preſence. He delighted to be with the children of men. Sometimes before that, he aſſumed a body, and afterwards laid it down again until he came indeed to take our nature upon him, never to leave it again. But here is meant, a ſpiritual preſence moſt

moſt of all: which the church in ſome ſort ever had, they now deſire, and he offers, as being a God hearing prayer. And to inſtance in one place for all, to ſee how ready Chriſt hath always been to ſhew his preſence to the church upon their deſire. What elſe is the burden of the 107th Pſalm, but a repetition of God's readineſs to ſhew his preſence in the church, upon their ſeeking unto him, and unfeigned deſire of it, notwithſtanding all their manifold provocations of him to anger, which is well ſummed up, Pſal. cvi. 43. "Many times did he deliver them, but they provoked him with their counſel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheleſs he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry."

It doth not content the church to have a kind of ſpiritual preſence of Chriſt; but, it is carried from deſire to deſire, till the whole deſire be accompliſhed: For, as there are gradual preſences of Chriſt, there are ſuitable deſires in the church, which riſe by degrees. Chriſt was preſent, 1. by his gracious ſpirit. And then, 2. more graciouſly preſent in the incarnation, the ſweeteſt time that ever the church had from the beginning of the world, until then. It being the deſire of nations, for the deſcription of thoſe who lived before his coming, is from the waiting for the conſolation of Iſrael, that is, for the firſt coming of Chriſt. And then there is a third, and more glorious preſence of Chriſt, that all of us wait for, whereby we are deſcribed to be ſuch as wait for the coming of Chriſt; for the ſoul of a chriſtian is never ſatisfied until it enjoy the higheſt degree of Chriſt's preſence, which the church knew well enough muſt follow in time. Therefore ſhe eſpecially deſires this ſpiritual preſence in a larger and more full meaſure, which ſhe, in ſome meaſure, already had. So then Chriſt is graciouſly preſent in his church, by his holy ſpirit. "I will be with you, (ſaith he,) unto the end of the world." Mat. xxviii. It is his promiſe, When I am gone myſelf, "I will not leave you comfortleſs;" but leave with you my vicar-general, the Holy Spirit, the comforter, who ſhall be always with you. But,

Queſt.—How ſhall we know that Chriſt is preſent in us?

Anſw.—To know this, we ſhall not need to pull him from heaven, we may know it in the word and ſacraments, and in the communion of ſaints; for theſe are the conveyances whereby he manifeſts himſelf, together with the work of his own gracious ſpirit in us; for as we need not take the ſun from heaven to know

know whether or not it be up, or be day, which may be known by the light, heat, and fruitfulneſs of the creature: and, as in the ſpring, we need not look to the heavens to ſee whether the ſun be come near us or not; for, looking on the earth, we may ſee all green, freſh, lively, ſtrong and vigorous. So it is with the preſence of Chriſt, we may know he is preſent, by that light which is in the ſoul, convincing us of better courſes to be taken of a ſpiritual life, to know heavenly things, and the difference of them from earthly, and to ſet a price upon them. When there is, together with light, a heat above nature, the affections are kindled to love the beſt things, and to joy in them.

And when, together with heat, there is ſtrength and vigour to carry us to ſpiritual duties, framing us to a holy communion with God, and one with another.

And likewiſe, when there is every way cheerfulneſs and enlargement of ſpirit; as it is with the creature when the ſun approacheth. For theſe cauſes the church deſires Chriſt, that ſhe may have more light, life, heat, vigour, ſtrength, and that ſhe may be more cheerful and fruitful in duties. The ſoul when it is once made ſpiritual, doth ſtill deſire a further and further preſence of Chriſt, to be made better and better.

What a comfort is this to chriſtians, that they have the preſence of Chriſt ſo far forth, as ſhall make them happy, and as the earth will afford. Nothing but heaven (or rather Chriſt in heaven), itſelf, will content the child of God. In the mean time, his preſence in the congregation, makes their ſouls, as it were, heaven. If the king's preſence, who carries the court with him, makes all places where he is, a court: ſo Chriſt, he carries a kind of heaven with him; whereſoever he is, his preſence hath with it, life, light, comfort, ſtrength and all. For one beam of his countenance will ſcatter all the clouds of grief whatſoever. It is no matter where we be, if Chriſt be with us. If with the three children in the fiery furnace, it is no matter, if a fourth be there alſo. So, if Chriſt be with us, the flames, nor nothing ſhall hurt us. If in a dungeon, as Paul and Silas were; if Chriſt's preſence be there, by his ſpirit to enlarge our ſouls, all is comfortable whatſoever. It changeth the nature of all things, ſweeteneth every thing, beſides that ſweetneſs which it brings unto the ſoul, by the preſence of the ſpirit; as we ſee in the Acts, "when they had received the Holy Ghoſt more abundantly," they cared not what they ſuffered, regarded not whipping

ping; nay, "were glad that they were accounted worthy to ſuffer any thing for Chriſt." Whence came this fortitude? from the preſence of Chriſt, and the comforter which he had formerly promiſed.

So let us have the ſpirit of Chriſt that comes from him, then it is no matter what our condition be in this world. Upon this ground, let us fear nothing that ſhall befal us in God's cauſe, whatſoever it is. We ſhall have a ſpirit of prayer at the worſt. God never takes away the ſpirit of ſupplication from his children, but leaves them that, until at laſt he poſſeſs them fully of their deſires. In all Chriſt's delays, let us look unto the cauſe, and to our carriage therein: and renew our repentance, that we may be in a fit ſtate to go to God, and God to come to us. Deſire him to fit us for prayer and holy communion with him, that we may never doubt of his preſence.

SERMON II.

CANTICLES v. 1.

"*I am come into my garden, my ſiſter, my ſpouſe; I have gathered*
"*my myrrh with my ſpice; I have gathered my honeycomb with*
"*my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: Eat, O*
"*friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved!*

THIS Song is a mirror of Chriſt's love; a diſcovery of which we have, in part, in this verſe. Wherein Chriſt accepts of the invitation of the church, and comes into his garden; and he entertains her with the terms of ſiſter and ſpouſe. Herein obſerve the deſcription of the church, and the ſweet compellation, "My ſiſter, my ſpouſe;" where there is both affinity and conſanguinity—all the bonds that may tie us to Chriſt, and Chriſt to us.

1. His ſiſter, by blood. 2. His ſpouſe, by marriage.

Chriſt is our brother, and the church, and every particular true member thereof, is his ſiſter. "I go, (ſaith Chriſt, to my

my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God." "Go, (saith he), and tell my brethren;" this was after his resurrection—his advancement did not change his disposition. Go tell my brethren, that left me so unkindly; go tell Peter who was most unkind of all, and most cast down with the sense of it. He became our brother by incarnation; for, all our union is from the first union of two natures in one person. Christ became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, to make us spiritually bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.

Therefore, let us labour to be like to him, who, for that purpose, became like to us, *Immanuel*, God with us; that we might be like him, and partake of the divine nature. Whom should we rather desire to be so like, than one so great, so gracious, so loving?

Again, Christ was not ashamed to call us brethren, nor abhorred the virgin's womb, to be shut up in these dark cells and straits; but took our base nature when it was at the worst; and not only our nature, but our miserable condition and curse due unto us. Was he not ashamed of us, and shall we be ashamed to own him and his cause? Against this cowardice, it is a thunderbolt which our Saviour Christ pronounceth: "He that is ashamed of me before men, him will I be ashamed of, before my Father and all the holy angels." Mark viii. 38. It argues a base disposition, either for frown or favour, to desert a good cause in evil times.

Again, It is a point of comfort to know that we have a brother, who is a favourite in heaven; who, though he abased himself for us, is yet Lord over all. Unless he had been our brother, he could not have been our husband; for husband and wife should be of one nature. That he might marry us, therefore he came and took our nature, so to be fitted to fulfil the work of our redemption. But now he is in heaven, set down at the right hand of God, the true Joseph, the high steward of heaven, he hath all power committed to him, he rules all. What a comfort is this to a poor soul that hath no friends in the world, that yet he hath a friend in heaven, that will own him for his brother; in, and through him, he may go to the throne of grace boldly, and pour out his soul. What a comfort was it to Joseph's brethren, that their brother was the second person in the kingdom?

Again,

Again, It ſhould be a motive to have good chriſtians in high eſtimation, and to take heed how we wrong them; for their brother will take their part. "Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?" ſaith the head in heaven, when his members were trodden on upon earth. It is more to wrong a chriſtian than the world takes it for; for Chriſt takes it as done to himſelf. Abſalom was a man wicked and unnatural, yet he could not endure the wrong that was done to his ſiſter Tamar. Jacob's ſons took it as a high indignity that their ſiſter ſhould be ſo abuſed. Hath Chriſt no affections, now he is in heaven, to her that is ſo near him as the church is? howſoever he ſuffer men to tyrannize over her for a while, yet it will appear ere long, that he will take the church's part, for he is our brother.

My ſiſter, my ſpouſe.

The church is the daughter of a king, begotten of God, the ſiſter, and ſpouſe of a king, becauſe ſhe is the ſiſter and ſpouſe of Chriſt, and mother of all ſpiritual kings; the church of Chriſt is every way royal. Therefore, we are kings becauſe we are chriſtians. Hence the Holy Ghoſt doth add here to ſiſter, ſpouſe. Indeed, taking the advantage of ſuch relations as are moſt comfortable, to ſet out the excellent and tranſcendent relation that is between Chriſt and his church, all others are not what they are termed ſo much, as glaſſes to ſee better things. Riches, beauty, marriage, nobility, &c. are ſcarce worthy of their names: theſe are but titles, and empty things, though our baſe nature make great matters of them; yet the reality and ſubſtance of all theſe are in heavenly things. True riches are the heavenly graces; true nobility is to be born of God, to be the ſiſter and ſpouſe of Chriſt. True pleaſures are thoſe of the ſpirit, which endure for ever, and will ſtand by us, when all outward comforts will vaniſh. That myſtical union and ſweet communion is ſet down with ſuch variety of expreſſions, to ſhew, that whatſoever is ſcattered in the creature ſeverally, is in him entirely. He is both a friend, and a brother, a head, and a huſband to us, therefore he takes the names of all; whence we may obſerve further,

That the church is the ſpouſe of Chriſt. It ſprings out of him, even as Eve was taken out of Adam's rib; ſo the ſpouſe of Chriſt was taken out of his ſide, when it was pierced. The church roſe out of his blood and death; for he redeemed it by

ſatisfying

ſatisfying divine juſtice; we being in ſuch a condition, that Chriſt muſt redeem us before he could wed us. Firſt, he muſt be incarnate in our nature, before he could be a fit huſband; and then, becauſe we were in bondage and captivity, we muſt be redeemed before he could marry us—he "purchaſed his church with his own blood." Chriſt hath a right to us, he bought us dearly.

Again, another foundation of this marriage between Chriſt and us is, conſent. He works us by his ſpirit to yield to him. There muſt be conſent on our part, which is not in us by nature, but wrought on by his ſpirit, &c. We yield to take him upon his own terms; that is, that we ſhall leave our father's houſe, all our former carnal acquaintance. When he hath wrought our conſent to this, then the marriage between him and us is ſtruck up.

Some few reſemblances will make the conſideration of this the more comfortable. 1. The huſband takes his wife under his own name—ſhe loſing her own name, is called by his. So we are called chriſtians from Chriſt. 2. The wife is taken with all her debt, and made partakers of the honours and riches of her huſband—whatſoever he hath is hers, and he ſtands anſwerable for all her debts. So it is here, we have not only the name of Chriſt upon us, but we partake of his honours, and are kings, prieſts, and heirs with him. Whatſoever he hath, he hath taken us into the fellowſhip of it; ſo that his riches are ours; and likewiſe, whatſoever is ours, that is ill, he hath taken it upon him, even the wrath due to us, for he came between that and us, when he was made ſin, and a curſe for us: ſo there is a bleſſed change between Chriſt and us—his honours and riches are ours. We have nothing to beſtow on him, but our beggary, ſins, and miſeries, which he took upon him. 3. Thoſe that bring together theſe two different parties are the friends of the bride; that is, the miniſters, as it is in John iii. 23. They are the paranymphs, the friends of the bride, that learn of Chriſt what to report to his ſpouſe; and ſo they woo for Chriſt, and open the riches, beauty, honour, and all that is lovely in him, which is indeed the ſpecial duty of miniſters, to lay open his unſearchable riches, that the church may know what a huſband ſhe is like to have, if ſhe cleave to him, and what an one ſhe leaves if ſhe forſake him. It was well ſaid in the council of Baſil out of Bernard, "None commits his wife to a vicar, for none is the huſband of the church." To be huſband of the church

church is one of the incommunicable titles of Christ, yet usurped by the Pope. Innocent the Third was the first that wronged Christ's bed, by challenging the title of husband of the church. Bernard forbids his scholar Eugenius this title, Epist. 337. It is enough for ministers to be friends of the bride. Let us yield him to be husband of the church, that hath given himself to sanctify it with washing of water and blood, Eph. v. 26. We are a wife of blood to him.

In this sweet conjunction, we must know, that by nature we are clean no otherwise than as spouses: for, what was Solomon's wife, Pharaoh's daughter? a heathen, till she came to be Solomon's spouse. And, as we read in Moses, the strange woman must have her hair cut off, and her nails pared, before she could be taken into the church, there must be an alteration: so before the church which is not heathenish, but indeed hellish by nature, and led by the spirit of the world, be fit to be the spouse of Christ, there must be an alteration and a change of nature; Christ must alter, renew, purge, and fit us for himself. The apostle saith, Eph. v. 16. it was the end of his death, not only to take us to heaven, but to sanctify us on earth, and prepare us that we might fit spouses for himself.

Use 1.—Let us often think of this nearness between Christ and us, if we once give our names to him; and not be discouraged for any sin or unworthiness in us. Who sues for a debt when she is married? Therefore answer all accusations thus: Go to Christ, if you have any thing to say to me, go to my husband. God is just, he will not have his justice twice satisfied, seeing whatsoever is due thereunto is satisfied by Christ our husband. What a comfort is this to a distressed conscience; if sin cannot dismay us, which is the ill of ills, and cause of all evil, what other ill can dismay us? He that exhorts us to bear with the infirmities one of another, and hath enjoined the husband to bear with the wife, as the weaker vessel, will he not bear with his church, as the weaker vessel, performing the duty of an husband in all our infirmities?

2. Again, his desire is to make her better, and not to cast her away for that which is amiss. And for outward ills, they are but to refine, and make us more conformable to Christ our husband, to fit us for heaven, the same way that he went. They have a blessing in them all, for he takes away all that is hurtful, he pities, and keeps us "as the apple of his eye." Therefore

fore, let us often think of this, since he hath vouchsafed to take us so near to himself. Let us not lose the comfort that this meditation will yield us. We love for goodness, beauty, riches, but Christ loves us to make us so, and then loves us because we are so in all estates whatsoever.

3. And if Christ be so near us, let us labour for chaste judgments, that we do not defile them with errors, seeing the whole soul is espoused to Christ. Truth is the spouse of our understandings; it is not left to us to be wanton in opinions, to take up what conceit we will of things. It hath often times been seen that one husband hath had many wives; but never from the beginning of the world, that one wife hath had many husbands. God promiseth to betroth his church to him in righteousness and faithfulness; that is, as he will be faithful to her, so she shall, by his grace, be faithful to him—faithfulness shall be mutual, the church shall not be false to Christ; so there is no christian soul must think to have many husbands. Take heed, then, of spiritual harlotry of heart, for our affections are for Christ, and cannot be better bestowed. In other things, we lose our love, and the things loved; but here we lose not our love: this is a perfecting love, which draws us to love that which is better than ourselves. We are as we affect, our affections are as their objects be. If they are set upon better things than ourselves, they are bettered by it—they are never rightly bestowed but when they are set upon Christ; and upon other things as they answer and stand with the love of Christ. For, the prime love, when it is rightly bestowed, it orders and regulates all other loves whatsoever. No man knows how to use earthly things, but a christian who hath first pitched his love on Christ, then seeing all things in him, and, in all them, a beam of that love of his, intending happiness to him, so he knows how to use every thing in order. Therefore let us keep our communion with Christ, and esteem nothing more than his love, because he esteems nothing more than ours.

Quest.— But how shall we know whether we be espoused to Christ or not?

Ans.—1. Our hearts can tell us, whether we yield consent to him or not. In particular, whether we receive him as he will be received, as a right husband; that is, whether we receive him to be ruled by him, to make him our head. For, the wife, when she yields to be married, therewith also surrenders up her

her own will, to be ruled by her husband; ſo far ſhe hath denied her own will, ſhe hath no will of her own. Chriſt hath wiſdom enough for us and himſelf too, whoſe wiſdom and will muſt be ours. To be led by divine truths, ſo far as they are diſcovered unto us, and to ſubmit ourſelves thereunto, is a ſign of a gracious heart that is married to Chriſt.

2. Again, a willingneſs to follow Chriſt in all conditions, as he is diſcovered in the word. To ſuffer Chriſt to have the ſovereignty in our affections above all other things and perſons in the world; this is the right diſpoſition of a true ſpouſe. For, as it was at the firſt inſtitution, there muſt be a leaving of father and mother, and all to cleave to the huſband: ſo here, when any thing and Chriſt cannot ſtand together, or elſe we ſhall never have the comfort of this ſweet name. Many men will be glad to own Chriſt, to be great by him; but (as St. Auſtin complains in his time) Chriſt Jeſus is not loved for Jeſus' own ſake, but for other things that he brings with him, peace, plenty, &c. as far as it ſtands with theſe contentments. If Chriſt and the world part once, it will be known which we followed. In times of peace, this is hardly diſcerned. If he will pay men's debts, ſo as they may have the credit and glory of the name to be called chriſtians; if he will redeem them from the danger of ſin, all is well: But only ſuch have the comfort of this communion, as love him for himſelf. Let us not ſo much trouble ourſelves about ſigns, as be careful to do our duty to Chriſt, and then will Chriſt diſcover his love clearly unto us.

Now they that are not brought ſo near to this happy condition by Chriſt, may yet have this encouragement, there is yet place of grace for them. Let them therefore conſider but theſe three things:—1. The excellency of Chriſt, and of the ſtate of the church, when it is ſo near him—2. The neceſſity of this to be ſo near him—3. That there is hope of it.—There is in Chriſt whatſoever may commend a huſband, birth, comelineſs, riches, friends, wiſdom, authority, &c.

1. The excellency of this condition to be one with Chriſt is, that all things are ours: for he is the king, and the church the queen of all. All things are ſerviceable to us. It is a wondrous nearneſs to be nearer to Chriſt than the angels, who are not his body, but ſervants that attend upon the church. The bride is nearer to him than the angels, for he is the head and huſband thereof, and not of the angels, Heb. ii. 16. What an excellent

excellent condition is this for poor flesh and blood that creeps up and down the earth here despised?

2. But especially, if we consider the necessity of it, we are all indebted for more than we are worth. To divine justice we owe a debt of obedience, and in want of that we owe a debt of punishment, and we cannot answer one for a thousand. What will become of us if we have not a husband to discharge all our debts, but to be imprisoned for ever?

A person that is a stranger to Christ, though he were an Achitophel for his brain, a Judas for his profession, a Saul for his place; yet, if his sins be set before him, he will be swallowed up of despair, fearing to be shut up eternally under God's wrath. Therefore, if nothing else move, yet let necessity compel us to take Christ.

3. Consider not only how suitable and how necessary he is unto us, but what hope there is to have him, when as he sueth to us by his messengers, and wooeth us, when as we should rather seek to him, and with other messengers sendeth a privy messenger, his holy spirit, to incline our hearts: let us therefore, as we love our souls, suffer ourselves to be won. But more of this in another place. The next branch is,

Christ's acceptation, "I have gathered my myrrh with my spice," &c. So that, together with Christ's presence, here is a gracious acceptation of the provision of the church, with a delight in it, and, withal, a bringing of more with him. The church had a double desire: 1. That Christ would come to accept of what she had for him, of his own grace which he had wrought in her soul; and 2. she was also verily persuaded that he would not come empty handed, only to accept of what was there, but also would bring abundance of grace and comfort with him Therefore, she desires acceptation and increase; both which desires he answers. He comes to his garden, shews his acceptation, and withal he brings more. "I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk," &c. Whence we observe, that God accepts of the graces of his children, and delights in them.

1. Because they are the fruits that come from his children, his spouse, his friend; love of the person wins acceptance of that which is presented from the person. What comes from love is lovingly taken. They

2. They are the graces of his ſpirit. If we have any thing that is good, all comes from the ſpirit, which is firſt in Chriſt our husband, and then in us. As the ointment was firſt poured on Aaron's head, and then ran down upon his rich garments, ſo all comes from Chriſt to us. St. Paul calls the wife the glory of her husband, becauſe (as in a glaſs) ſhe reſembleth the graces of her husband, who may ſee his own graces in her: ſo it is with Chriſt and the church. Face anſwereth to face; (as Solomon ſaith in another caſe) Chriſt ſees his own face, beauty, glory in his church, ſhe reflects his beams, he looks in love upon her, and always with his looks conveys grace and comfort; and the church doth reflect back again his grace. Therefore, Chriſt loves but the reflection of his own graces in his children, and therefore accepts them.

3. His kindneſs is ſuch, as he takes all in good part; Chriſt is love and kindneſs itſelf. Why doth he give unto her the name of ſpouſe and ſiſter, but that he would be kind and loving, and that we ſhould conceive ſo of him? We ſee, then, the graces of Chriſt accepting of us, and what we do in his ſtrength. Both we ourſelves are ſacrifices, and what we offer is a ſacrifice acceptable to God, through him that offered himſelf as a ſacrifice of a ſweet ſmelling ſavour, from which God ſmells a ſavour of reſt. God accepts of Chriſt firſt, and then of us, and what comes from us in him. We may boldly pray, as Pſ. xx. 3. "Lord remember all our offerings, and accept all our ſacrifices." The bleſſed apoſtle St. Paul doth will us, to offer up ourſelves a holy and acceptable ſacrifice to God, when we are once in Chriſt.—In the Old Teſtament we have divers manifeſtations of this acceptation. He accepted the ſacrifice of Abel (as it is thought) by fire from heaven; and ſo Eliah's ſacrifice, and Solomon's, by fire. So in the New Teſtament, he ſhewed his acceptation of the diſciples meeting together, by a mighty wind, and then filling them with the Holy Ghoſt. But now the declaration of the acceptation of our perſons, graces, and ſacrifices, that we offer to him, is moſt in peace of conſcience, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt; and from a holy fire of love kindled by the ſpirit, whereby our ſacrifices are burned. In the incenſe of prayer, how many ſweet ſpices are burned together, by this fire of faith working by love; as humility and patience in ſubmitting to God's will, hope of a gracious anſwer, holineſs, love to others, &c.

Uſe 1.—If ſo be that God accepts the performances and graces,

(especially the prayers of his children), let it be an argument to encourage us to be much in all holy duties. It would deaden the heart of any man to perform service where it should not be accepted, and the eye turned aside, not vouchsafing a gracious look upon it: this would be a killing of all comfortable endeavours. But when all that is good is accepted, and what is amiss is pardoned; when a broken desire, a cup of cold water, shall not go unrespected, nay unrewarded, what can we desire more? It is infidelity, which is dishonourable to God and uncomfortable to ourselves, that makes us so barren and cold in duties.

Use 2.—Only let our care be to approve our hearts unto Christ. When our hearts are right, we cannot but think comfortably of Christ. Those that have offended some great persons, are afraid when they hear from them, because they think they are in a state displeasing to them: So a soul that is under the guilt of any sin, is so far from thinking that God accepts of it, that it looks to hear nothing from him but some message of anger and displeasure. But one that preserves acquaintance, due distance, and respect to a great person, hears from him with comfort; before he breaks open a letter, or sees any thing, he supposes it comes from a friend, one that loves him: So, as we would desire to hear nothing but good news from heaven, and acceptation of all that we do, let us be careful to preserve ourselves in a good estate, or else our souls will tremble upon any discovery of God's wrath. The guilty conscience argues, What can God shew to me, being such a wretch? The heart of such an one cannot but misgive; as where peace is made, it will speak comfort. It is said of Daniel, that he was a man of God's desires; and of St. John, that Christ so loved him, that he leaned on his breast.—Every one cannot be a Daniel, nor one that leans on Christ's bosom. There are degrees of favour and love; but there is no child of God but is beloved and accepted of him in some degree. But something of this before in the former chapter.

"I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey," &c. That is, I have taken contentment in thy graces; together with acceptation there is a delight, and God not only accepts, but he delights in the graces of his children. All my delight (saith David) is in those that are excellent: But this is not all, Christ comes with an enlargement of what he finds.

Christ comes, and comes not empty, whensoever he comes, but

but with abundance of grace. If St. Paul (who was but Chriſt's inſtrument) could tell the Romans, "I hope to come to you in abundance of grace and comfort," Rom. xv. 29. becauſe he was a bleſſed inſtrument to convey good from Chriſt to the people of God, as a conduit-pipe; how much more ſhall Chriſt himſelf, where he is preſent, come with graces and comfort? Thoſe that have communion with Chriſt, therefore, have a comfortable communion, being ſure to have it enlarged; for, "to him that hath ſhall be given," Mat. xxv. 29. It is not only true of his laſt coming, (when he ſhall come to judge the quick and the dead) "I come, and my reward is with me;" but alſo of all his intermediate comings that are between. When he comes to the ſoul, he comes not only to accept what is there, but ſtill with his reward with him, the increaſe of grace, to recompence all that is good with the increaſe thereof. This made his preſence ſo deſired in the goſpel with thoſe that had gracious hearts. They knew all was the better for Chriſt, the company the better, for he never left any houſe, or table where he was, but there was an increaſe of comfort and of grace. And as it was in his perſonal, ſo it is in his ſpiritual preſence, he never comes, but he increaſes grace and comfort.

Therefore, let us be ſtirred up to have communion with Chriſt by this motive, that thus we may have an increaſe of a further meaſure of grace. Let us labour to be ſuch as Chriſt may delight in; for our graces are honey and ſpices to him, and where he taſtes ſweetneſs, he will bring more with him. To him that overcometh, he promiſeth the hidden manna. They had manna before, but he means they ſhall have more abundant communion with him, who is the hidden manna. There is abundance in him to be had, as the ſoul is capable of abundance. Therefore, we may moſt fruitfully and comfortably be converſant in holy exerciſes, and communion with Chriſt, becauſe our ſouls are fit to be enlarged more and more, till they have their fulneſs in heaven; and ſtill there is more grace and comfort to be had in Chriſt, the more we have to deal with him.

But to come to ſhew what is meant by honey and wine, &c. not to take uncertain grounds from theſe words, but that which may be a foundation for us to build comfort and inſtruction on. We will not ſhew, in particular, what is meant by wine and honey, for that is not intended by the Holy Ghoſt; but ſhew, in general, how acceptable the graces of the ſpirit of Chriſt are to

him—that they feed him and delight him, as honey and wine do us; becauſe in the covenant of grace he filleth us by his ſpirit of grace, to have comfort in us as we have in him: for, except there be a mutual joy in one another, there is not communion.—Therefore Chriſt furniſheth his church with ſo much grace as is neceſſary for a ſtate of abſence here, that may fit her for communion with him for ever in heaven. As Iſaac ſent Rebecca before the marriage, jewels and ornaments to wear, that ſhe might be more lovely when they met: ſo our bleſſed Saviour he ſends to his ſpouſe from heaven, jewels and ornaments; that is, graces, wherewith being adorned, he may delight in her more and more till the marriage be fulfilled. Therefore in this book the church is brought in delighting in Chriſt, and he in the church. "Thy love," ſaith the church to him, "is ſweeter than wine," Cant. i. 2. Chriſt ſaith to the church again, "Thy love is ſweeter than wine." Whatſoever Chriſt ſaith to the church, the church ſaith back again to Chriſt, and he back again to the church: ſo there is a mutual contentment and joy in one another.

Eat, O friends, drink, &c.

Here is an invitation, when he comes ſtored with more grace and comfort, he ſtirs them up; both the church, others, and all that bear good will to his people, that they would delight in the graces and comforts of his church. Whence obſerve, that we ought to rejoice in the comforts and graces of others, and of ourſelves. He ſtirreth up the church here as well as others, for he ſpeaks to all, both to the church and the friends of it. He had need to ſtir her up to enjoy the comfort of her own grace; for they are two diſtinct benefits, to have grace, and to know that we have it, though one ſpirit work both. The ſpirit works grace, and ſhews us the things that God hath given us; yet ſometimes it doth the one and not the other. In the time of deſertion and of temptation we have grace, but we know it not; right to comfort, but we feel it not. There is no comfort of a ſecret unknown treaſure; but ſo it is with the church, ſhe doth not always take notice of her own graces, and the right ſhe hath to comfort.

We have need to have Chriſt's ſpirit to help us to know what good is in us. And indeed a chriſtian ſhould not only examine his heart for the evil that is in him, to be humbled, but what good there is, that he may joy and be thankful. And ſince Chriſt accepts the very firſt fruits, the earneſt, and delights in them, we ſhould know what he delights in, that we may go

boldly

boldly to him, conſidering that it is not of ourſelves, but of Chriſt, whatſoever is graciouſly good. Therefore we ought to know our own graces; for Chriſt, when he will have us comfortable indeed, will diſcover to us what cauſe we have to rejoice, and ſhew us what is the work of his own ſpirit, and our right to all comfort.

And ſo for others; we ſhould not only joy in ourſelves, and in our own condition and lot, but alſo in the happy condition of every good chriſtian. There is joy in heaven at the converſion of one ſinner, Luke xv. 10. God the Father joys to have a new ſon; God the Son to ſee the fruit of his own redemption, that one is pulled out of the ſtate of damnation; and God the Holy Ghoſt, that he hath a new temple to dwell in; the Angels, that they have a new charge to look to, which they had not before, to join with them to praiſe God: ſo there is joy in heaven, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, with the Angels, joy at it; and all true hearted chriſtians joy in the graces of one another.

For, 1. God, Chriſt, and the Holy Ghoſt have glory by it. 2. The church hath comfort by the increaſe of a ſaint. 3. The prayer of a chriſtian adds new ſtrength to the church. What a happy condition is it, when God's glory, the church's comfort and ſtrength, and our own joy meet together? ſo that we ſhould all take notice of the grace of God in others.

We ought to take notice of the works of God in creation and providence; when we ſee plants, ſtars, and ſuch like, or elſe we diſhonour God; What then ſhould we do for his gifts and graces in his children, who are above theſe in dignity? ſhould we not take notice of what is graciouſly good, and praiſe God for it? Thus they did for Paul's converſion, they glorified God; for when they ſaw that Paul of a wolf, was become not only a ſheep, but a ſhepherd and leader of God's flock, they glorified God.

So the believing Jews, when the Gentiles were converted, glorified God that he had taken the Gentiles to be his garden and people, Acts xi. 18. When Paul and others had planted the goſpel, and God gave the increaſe, the godly Jews rejoiced at that good: ſo we that are Gentiles ſhould rejoice to hear of the converſion of the Jews, and pray for it, for then there will be a general joy when that is. Want of joy ſhews want of grace. There is not a ſurer character of a ſatanical and cainiſh diſpoſition, than to look on the graces of God's children with a malignant

eye, as Cain, who hated his brother becauſe his works were better than his. Thoſe who deprave the graces of God in others, and cloud them with diſgrace, that they may not ſhine, and will not have the ointment of their good names to ſpread, but caſt dead flies into it, ſhew that they are of his diſpoſition who is the accuſer of the brethren; it is a ſign of the child of the devil; all that have grace in them are of Chriſt's and the Angels' diſpoſition; they joy at the converſion and growth of any chriſtians. Here ſuch as they are ſtiled friends and beloved; and indeed none but friends and beloved can love as Chriſt loves, and delight as Chriſt delights.

SERMON III.

CANTICLES v. 1. 2.

" *I am come into my garden, my ſiſter, my ſpouſe: I have gathered*
" *my myrrh with my ſpice: I have eaten my honey-comb with my*
" *honey: I have drunk my wine with my milk: Eat, O friends,*
" *drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!*

" *I ſleep, but my heart waketh, &c.*

IT hath been ſhewed how Chriſt and the church were feaſting together. She entreated his company to come into his garden, and eat his pleaſant fruits; He according to her deſire, was come, and not only feaſted on the Church's proviſion, but alſo brought more with him. Chriſt taking walks in his garden (that is, his Church and every particular ſoul, which is as a ſweet paradiſe for him to delight in) is much refreſhed; and in witneſs of acceptance brings increaſe. What greater encouragement can we wiſh, than that we being by nature, as the earth ſince the fall, accurſed, ſhould be the ſoil of Chriſt's delight, planted and watered by him, and that what we yield ſhould be ſo well taken of him. We are under ſo gracious a covenant, that all our ſervices are accepted, not only our honey, but honey-comb; not only our wine, but our milk; our weak ſervices as well as our ſtrong, becauſe the ſpirit which we have from him ſweeteneth

ſweeteneth all. As in nature there is one common influence from heaven, but yet variety of flowers, violets, roſes, gilly-flowers, ſpices, all ſweet in their ſeveral kinds, with a different kind of ſweetneſs: ſo all graces have their beginning from the common influence of Chriſt's ſpirit, though they differ one from another, and are all accepted of the Father of light from whence they come, James i. 17. Chriſt wonders at his own grace, "O woman, great is thy faith!" Mat. xxv. 21. and Cant. iii. 6. "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderneſs, like pillars of ſmoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincenſe, with all powders of the merchant?"

Let not the weakeſt of all others be diſcouraged; Chriſt looks not to what he brings, ſo much as out of what ſtore; that which is leaſt in quantity may be moſt in proportion, as the widow's mite was more in acceptance than richer offerings, Luke xxi. 3. A pair of turtle doves was accepted in the law, and thoſe who brought but goat's hair to the building of the tabernacle, Levit. v. 7. Exod. xxxv. 6.

The particulars here ſpecified that Chriſt took delight in, are myrrh and ſpice, honey and honey-comb, milk; which ſhew, 1. the ſweetneſs, 2. the variety, 3. the uſe of grace and ſpiritual comfort.

Myrrh and ſpices refreſh the ſpirits, and preſerve from putrefaction, which are therefore uſed in embalming. If the ſoul be not embalmed with grace, it is a noiſome carrion ſoul, and as it is in itſelf, ſo every thing that cometh from it is abominable.

Milk and honey nouriſh and ſtrengthen, and wine increaſeth ſpirits, and thereupon encourageth, and allayeth ſorrow and cares: "Give wine to him that is ready to die." The ſenſe of the love of Chriſt is ſweeter than wine, it baniſheth fears and ſorrow and care.

From this mutual delight between Chriſt and his ſpouſe, we obſerve next, that,

There is a mutual feaſting between Chriſt and his church. The church bringeth what ſhe hath of his ſpirit, and Chriſt comes with more plenty.

For there being ſo near a covenant between him and us, we are by his grace to perform all offices on our part, we invite him, and he inviteth us. There is not the meaneſt chriſtian in whom there

there is not ſomewhat to welcome Chriſt withal; but Chriſt ſends his proviſion before, and comes (as we ſay) to his own coſt: he ſends a ſpirit of faith, a ſpirit of love, a ſpirit of obedience. Some are content to invite others, but are loth to go to others, as if it were againſt ſtate: they would have wherewith to entertain Chriſt, but are unwilling to be beholden to Chriſt. 2. Some are content to have benefit by Chriſt, as his righteouſneſs to cover them, &c. but they deſire not grace to entertain Chriſt; now a heart truly gracious deſireth both to delight in Chriſt, and that he may delight in it: It deſireth grace together with mercy, holineſs with happineſs. Chriſt could not delight in his love to us, if we by his grace had not love planted in our hearts to him. But to come to ſpeak of this feaſt.

We ſee it pleaſeth Chriſt to veil heavenly matters with compariſons fetched from earthly things, that ſo he may enter into our ſouls the better by our ſenſes.

1. Chriſt maketh us a feaſt, a marriage feaſt with the king's ſon, of all feaſts the moſt magnificent. A feaſt, firſt in regard of the choice rarities we have in Chriſt. We have the beſt, and the beſt of the beſt. Fat things, and the marrow of fatneſs, wine and wine on the lees, refined, that preſerveth the ſtrength, Iſa. xxv. 6. The comforts we have from Chriſt are the beſt comforts, the peace, the beſt peace, the privileges, the higheſt privileges. His fleſh crucified for us to ſatisfy divine juſtice, is meat indeed, his blood ſhed for us, is drink indeed, John vi. 55. that is the beſt, the only meat and drink to refreſh our ſouls, becauſe theſe feed our ſouls, and that to eternal life. The love of God the father in giving Chriſt to death, and Chriſt's love in giving himſelf, together with full ſatisfaction to divine juſtice: this gift it is that the ſoul eſpecially feeds on. What could Chriſt give better than himſelf to feed on? he thought nothing elſe worthy for the ſoul to feed on: and this it daily feeds on, as daily guilt riſeth from the breaking out of the remainder of corruption. Other dainties are from this, from hence we have the ſpirit and graces of the ſpirit. If he giveth himſelf, will he not give all things with himſelf?

2. As Chriſt maketh a feaſt of choice things for his elect and choice ſpouſe, ſo there is variety, as in a feaſt. "Chriſt is made to us of God, wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. that we ſhould not be too much caſt down with thoughts of our own folly, guilt, unholineſs and miſery. There

There is that in Chriſt which anſwereth to all our wants, and an all ſufficiency for all degrees of happineſs: therefore he hath terms from whatſoever is glorious and comfortable in heaven and earth. Chriſt is all marrow, all ſweetneſs; all the ſeveral graces and comforts we have, and the ſeveral promiſes whereby they are made over and conveyed unto us, are but Chriſt ſet forth in ſeveral manners, as the need of every Chriſtian ſhall require. Chriſt himſelf is the ocean iſſuing into ſeveral ſtreams to refreſh the city of God. We can be in no condition, but we have a promiſe to feed on, and all promiſes are Yea and Amen made to us in Chriſt, and performed to us for Chriſt, 2 Cor. i. 20.

3. Therefore as we have in Chriſt a feaſt for variety, ſo for ſufficiency of all good. No man goeth hungry from a feaſt, it was never heard for any to famiſh at a feaſt. In Chriſt there is not only abundance, but redundance, a diffuſive and a ſpreading goodneſs. As in breaſts to give milk, in clouds to drop down ſhowers, in the ſun to ſend forth beams. As Chriſt is full of grace and truth, ſo he fully diſchargeth all his offices. There is an overflowing of all that is good for our good. He that could multiply bread for the body, can multiply grace for the ſoul: If he giveth life, he giveth it in abundance, John x. 10: If he giveth water of life, he giveth rivers, not ſmall ſtreams: If he giveth peace and joy, he giveth it in abundance, his ſcope is to fill up our joy to the full, John vii. 38.; as he is able, ſo he is willing to do for us far more abundantly than we are able to think or ſpeak. Where Chriſt is preſent, he bringeth plenty with him; if wine be wanting at the feaſt, he will rather turn water into wine, than there ſhould be a want.

4. In a feaſt, there is variety of friendly company; ſo here, friends are ſtirred up to refreſh themſelves with us; we have the bleſſed Trinity, the Angels, and all our fellow-members in Chriſt to come with us.

There is no envy in ſpiritual things, wherein whatſoever the one hath, the other hath not the leſs.

5. In a feaſt, becauſe it is intended for rejoicing, there is muſic, and what muſic like to the ſweet harmony between God reconciled in Chriſt, and the ſoul, and between the ſoul and itſelf in inward peace and joy of the Holy Ghoſt, ſhedding the love of Chriſt in the ſoul. We do not only joy, but glory in the hope of glory, and in afflictions, and in God now as ours,

in

in whom now by Christ we have an interest. When we come sorrowful to this feast, we depart chearful. This, like David's harp, stills all passions and distempers of spirit.

The founder and master of the feast is Christ himself, and withall is both guest and banquet and all. All graces and comforts are the fruits of his spirit, and he alone that infused the soul can satisfy the soul; he that is above the conscience can only quiet the conscience, he that is wisdom that sends forth maids, his ministers, to invite to his feast: it is he that cheereth up his guests as here. Those who invited others, brought ointment and poured it out upon them, to shew their welcome and to chear them up, as may appear from our Saviour's speech to the Pharisee that invited him, Luke vii. 44.: So we have from Christ both the oil of grace and the oil of gladness; he creates the fruits of the lips to be peace, Isa. lvii. 19. speaking that peace and joy to the heart that others do to the ear. He raiseth pastors according to his own heart, to feed his sheep.

The vessels wherein Christ conveyeth his dainties, are, the ministry of the word and sacraments. By the word and sacraments we come to enjoy Christ and his comforts and graces, and by this feast of grace, we come at length to the feast of feasts, that feast of glory, when we shall be satisfied with the image of God, and enjoy fulness of pleasures for evermore, and which adds to the fulness, we shall fully know that it shall be a never interrupted joy.

We see then that we cannot please Christ better than in shewing ourselves welcome, by chearful taking part of his rich provision. It is an honour to his bounty to fall to, and it is the temper of spirit that a christian aims at, to "rejoice always in the Lord," Phil. iv. 4. and that from enjoying our privileges in him. We are not bidden to mourn always, but to rejoice always, and that upon good advisement, Rejoice, and "I say again" (saith St. Paul) "Rejoice," Phil. iv. 4. Indeed we have causes of mourning, but it is that the seed of joy should be sown in mourning, and we can never be in so forlorn a condition, wherein if we understand Christ and ourselves, we have not cause of joy. "In me" (saith Christ) "ye shall have peace, John xvi. 33. The world will feed us with the bread of affliction. If the world can help it, we shall have sorrow enough, and Christ knows that well enough, and stirs up to a chearful feeding on that he hath procured for us. He hath both will, and skill, and power, and authority

thority to feed us to everlaſting life; for the Father ſent him forth, and ſealed him to that purpoſe. All the ſprings of our joy are from him.

Our duty is to accept Chriſt's inviting of us; what will we do for him, if we will not feaſt with him? we will not ſuffer with him, if we will not feaſt with him. Happy are they that come, though compelled by croſſes and other ſharp ways. If we rudely and churliſhly refuſe his feaſt here, we are likely never to taſte of his feaſt hereafter. Nothing provokes ſo deeply as kindneſs deſpiſed; it was the cauſe of the Jews' rejection; "How ſhall we eſcape," not if we perſecute, but if we do but "neglect ſo great ſalvation?" Heb. ii. 3.

That which we ſhould labour to bring with us is, a taſte for theſe dainties, and an appetite to them. The ſoul hath a taſte of its own; and as all creatures that have life, have a taſte to reliſh and diſtinguiſh of that which is good for them from that which is offenſive, ſo whereſoever ſpiritual life is, there is likewiſe a taſte ſuitable to the ſweet reliſh that is in ſpiritual things. God would loſe the glory of many excellent creatures, if there were not ſeveral ſenſes to diſcern of ſeveral goodneſſes in them; ſo if there were not a taſte in the ſoul, we could never delight in God, and his rich goodneſs in Chriſt.

Taſte is the moſt neceſſary ſenſe for the preſervation of the creature, becauſe there is neareſt application in taſte; and that we ſhould not be deceived in taſte, we hear, ſee, and ſmell before; and if theſe ſenſes give a good report of the object, then we taſte it, and digeſt it, and turn it into fit nouriſhment; ſo the ſpirit of man, after judging of the fitneſs of what is preſented, taſtes of it, delights in it, and is nouriſhed by it. There is an attractive drawing power in the ſoul, whereby every member ſucks that out of the food that is convenient for it; ſo the ſoul draws out what is well digeſted by judgment, and makes it its own for ſeveral uſes.

The chief thing that Chriſt requires is a good ſtomach to theſe dainties.

1. The means to procure an appetite.—We are firſt, to be ſenſible of ſpiritual wants and miſery. The paſſover lamb was eaten with four herbs; ſo Chriſt crucified reliſheth beſt to a ſoul affected with bitterneſs of ſin. Whilſt men are rich in their own conceit, they go empty away; the duties and performances they

they truſt to, are but huſks, windy empty chaff—ſwelling is not kind nouriſhment.

2. That which hinders the ſharpneſs of the ſtomach is, cold defluxions, which dull and flat the edge of it. So, upon plodding upon the world, cold diſtillations drop upon the ſoul, and take away the ſavour and deſire of heavenly things. Theſe things fill not. There is both a vanity of emptineſs, and a vanity of ſhort continuance in them. Why ſhould we lay out our money, ſpend our time, our wits, our endeavour, ſo much about them? this makes ſo many ſtarvelings in religion.

Beſides, there be other noxious affections to be purged, as 1 Pet. ii. 1. which breed a diſtaſte and diſaffection to ſpiritual things, as malice, guile, &c. How can Chriſt be ſweet to that ſoul unto whom revenge is ſweet?

3. Exerciſe quickens appetite.—Thoſe that exerciſe themſelves unto godlineſs, ſee a need of ſpiritual ſtrength to maintain duty. A dull formaliſt keeps his round, and is many years after where he was before—ſees no need of further growth or ſtrength. A chriſtian life, managed as it ſhould be indeed, as it hath much going out, ſo it muſt have much coming in, elſe it will not elſe be kept up. Thoſe that have a journey to go, will refreſh themſelves for it, leaſt they faint by the way.

4. Company, likewiſe, of ſuch as labour for that bleſſed food that endureth to life eternal, provoketh to fall to, as the reſt do, eſpecially if they be equal, or go beyond us in parts; for we will reaſon with ourſelves, Have not I as much need as they? if theſe things are good for them, then they are good for me.

Thus St. Paul foretelleth, that the example of the Gentiles ſhould provoke the Jews to come in, and taſte of the banquet Chriſt hath provided for both. Eſpecially this ſhould ſtir us up earneſtly to take our part in what Chriſt hath provided; becauſe we know not how ſoon the table may be taken away. When men ſee the diſhes in removing, though before they have diſcourſed away much time of their ſupper, yet then they will fall freſh to it. We know not how long wiſdom will be inviting of us; it will be our wiſdom to take our time, leſt we put off ſo long, till wiſdom herſelf laughs at our deſtruction, and a famine be ſent, of all famines the moſt miſerable, a famine of the word; and then we may pine away eternally without comfort.

Chriſt

Chriſt will not always ſtand inviting of us. If we will have none of his cheer, others will, and ſhall, when we ſhall ſtarve.

Let this draw us on, that we ſee here Chriſt's hearty and free welcome, the gracious look that we are like to have from him. He counts it an honour, ſince he hath made ſuch rich proviſion, for us to take part: and for our part to ſhew our unwillingneſs, that ſuch kindneſs ſhould be refuſed. We cannot honour his bounty more than to feed liberally of what he liberally ſets before us. We are glad to perceive our friends, upon invitation, to think themſelves welcome. Let us open our mouth wide, ſince Chriſt is ſo ready to fill it. We are not ſtraitened in his love, but in our own hearts. The widow's oil failed not till her veſſels failed. We are bidden to delight in the Lord; and in whom ſhould we delight, but where all fulneſs is to be had to delight in? Our ſpirits are not ſo large as thoſe bleſſed comforts are, which we are called to the enjoyment of. If the capacity of our ſouls were a thouſand times larger, yet there is a large ſea of comfort in Chriſt, that they are not able to comprehend it. A taſte of theſe good things breeds joy unſpeakable, and peace that paſſeth underſtanding; what will the fulneſs do? This taſte we feel in the ordinances will bring us to that fulneſs hereafter. O let us keep our appetite for theſe things which are ſo delightful, ſo ſuitable to the ſoul. How great is that goodneſs which he both lays up for hereafter, and lays out for his, even here in this life!

In ſome ages of the church, the feaſts that Chriſt hath made have been more ſolemn and ſumptuous than in others thereafter, as Chriſt hath been more or leſs clearly and generally manifeſted. At Chriſt's firſt coming there was a greater feaſt than before; becauſe the riches of God's love in Chriſt were then laid open, and the pale of the church was enlarged by the coming in of the Gentiles: ſo will there be a royal feaſt when the Jews ſhall be converted. "Bleſſed then ſhall thoſe be that are called to the ſupper of the Lamb." Rev. xix. 9. Suppers are in the end of the day, and this ſupper ſhall be furniſhed towards the end of the world.

But then will be the true magnificent ſupper, when all that belong to God's election, ſhall meet together, and feed upon that heavenly manna for ever: then there will be nothing but marrow itſelf, and without all dregs. In all our contentments here, there is ſome mixture of the contrary; then, nothing but pure

pure quinteſſence. In the mean time, he lets fall ſome manna in this our wilderneſs, he lets us reliſh that now: it will not putrify us as the other manna did, but endure, and make us endure for ever. It is the true bread of life.

Mark how Chriſt draws his ſpouſe on to drink, and drink abundantly—there is no danger of drinking too much: where the ſpring is infinite, we can never draw theſe wells dry, never ſuck theſe breaſts of conſolation too much; and the more ſtrong and cheerful we are, the better ſervice we ſhall perform, and the more accepted: delight is as ſugar, ſweet in itſelf, and it ſweetens all things elſe. The joy of the Lord is our ſtrength. Duties come off more gracefully, and religion is made more lovely in the eyes of all, when it comes forth in ſtrength and cheerfulneſs; Chriſt's houſekeeping is credited hereby. "In our Father's houſe is plenty enough." When the martyrs had drank largely, it made them forget friends, riches, honours, life itſelf: the joy ſtirred up by it, carried them through all torments.

If any be hindered by thoughts of unworthineſs, if affected deeply with it, let them conſider what kind of men were compelled to the banquet—the blind, the lame. See a lively picture of God's mercy in the example of the prodigal; he fears ſharp chiding, and the father provides a rich banquet; he goeth to his father, but the father runs to meet him. Did Chriſt ever turn back any that came unto him, if they came out of a true ſenſe of their wants?

Eat, O friends.

Chriſt, out of the largeneſs of his affections, multiplieth new titles and appellations, as "beloved," and "friends." Chriſt provides a banquet, and invites his friends, not his enemies. Thoſe good things that neither eye hath ſeen, nor ear hath heard, that are above our conceit to apprehend, theſe are provided for thoſe that love him, not that hate him: he mingles another cup for them, a cup of wrath, and they are to drink up the very dregs of it. Friendſhip is the ſweetneſs, intimacy, and ſtrength of love. In our friends, our love dwells, and reſts itſelf. Conjugal friendſhip is the ſweeteſt friendſhip. All the kinds and degrees of friendſhip meet in Chriſt towards his ſpouſe; it is the friendſhip of a husband, of a brother; and, if there be any relation in the world wherein friendſhip is, all is too little to expreſs the love of Chriſt.

In

In friendſhip there is mutual conſent, an union of judgment and affections, there is a mutual ſympathy in the good and ill of one another, as if there were one ſoul in two bodies: there are mutual friends and mutual enemies. "Do I not hate them," ſaith David, "that hate thee?" There is mutual love of one another for their own ſakes; in flattery men love themſelves moſt; in ſemblance love others; but all is in reflection to themſelves.

There is liberty, which is the life of friendſhip; there is a free intercourſe between friends, a free opening of ſecrets: ſo here Chriſt openeth his ſecrets to us, and we to him; we acquaint him with the moſt hidden thoughts of our hearts, and we lay open all our cares and deſires before him: thus Abraham was called God's friend, and the diſciples Chriſt's friends. It is the office of the ſpirit to reveal the ſecrets of Chriſt's heart to us, concerning our own ſalvation; he doth not reveal himſelf to the world.

In friendſhip there is mutual ſolace and comfort one in another. Chriſt delighteth himſelf in his love to his church, and his church delighteth herſelf in her love to Chriſt. Chriſt's delight was to be with the ſons of men, and ours is to be with him.

In friendſhip there is a mutual honour and reſpect one of another: but here is ſome difference in this friendſhip; for though Chriſt calls us friends, and therein, in ſome ſort, brings himſelf down to us, yet we muſt remember that this is a friendſhip of unequals: Chriſt's honouring of us is, his putting honour upon us; our honouring of him is, the giving him the honour due to his name. This friendſhip muſt be maintained by due reſpect on our parts. As he is our friend, ſo he is our king, and knows how to correct us, if we forget our diſtance. If he here ſeem to uſe us hardly, it is that he may uſe us the more kindly after: he ſuffers much for us, therefore we may allow him the liberty of ſeaſonably correcting of us.

He that inſpireth friendſhip into others, will undoubtedly keep the laws of friendſhip himſelf, will count our enemies his enemies. The enemies of the church ſhall one day know that the church is not friendleſs.

And as his friendſhip is ſweet, ſo it is conſtant in all conditions; he uſeth not his friends as we do flowers, regard them only

when they are freſh; but he breeds that in us, which make us that he may ſtill delight in us. If other friends fail, as friends may fail, yet this friend will never fail us. If we be not aſhamed of him, he will never be aſhamed of us. How comfortable would our life be, if we could draw out the comfort this title of friend affordeth? It is a comfortable, a fruitful, an eternal friendſhip.

I ſleep, but my heart waketh.

Here the church expreſſeth a changeable paſſage of her ſpiritual condition, after ſhe had recovered herſelf out of a former deſertion, expreſſed in the beginning of the third chapter, and enjoyed a comfortable intercourſe with Chriſt; now ſhe falleth into a deeper deſertion and temptation, from the remainder of corruption getting ſtrength. The church now falleth aſleep, then was awake in the night, and ſought her beloved. Here is no preſent awaking, no ſeeking; there, no miſuſage by the watchmen as here; there ſhe findeth him more ſpeedily, here ſhe falls ſick with love before Chriſt diſcovereth himſelf.

Before we come to the words, obſerve in general,

That the ſtate of the church, and of every chriſtian, is ſubject to ſpiritual alterations.—The church is always beloved, a ſpouſe, a friend; but in this one ſtate there falleth out variety of changes. No creature is ſubject to ſo many changes as man; from a ſtate of innocency he fell into a ſtate of corruption; from that he, by grace, is reſtored to a ſtate of grace, and from grace to glory; where his condition ſhall be, as Chriſt's now is, and as the heavens the place is, altogether unchangeable. And in that ſtate of grace, how many intercourſes are there? the foundation of God's love to us, and grace in us, always remaining the ſame; once beloved, for ever beloved.

We ſee here, after a feaſt the church falleth aſleep. See it in Abraham, ſometimes ſtrong in faith, ſometimes fearful. David ſometimes ſtanding, ſometimes falling, ſometimes recovering himſelf, and ſtanding faſter; ſometimes triumphing, "the Lord is the light of my countenance, whom ſhall I fear?" ſometimes again, "I ſhall one day fall by the hands of Saul." In the very ſame Pſalm, he begins with, "Rebuke me not in thy wrath, and ends with, "Away ye wicked;" Elias, though zealous, yet after flies for his life. So Job and Peter, ſometimes reſolute and valiant, at other times ſink for fear.

The

The ground is, by reaſon of variety of outward occurrences working upon the diverſity of principles in us, nature and grace; both nature and grace are always active in us in ſome degree: when corruption gets ſtrength, then we find a ſick ſtate creeping upon us, and loſe our former frame. It is with the ſoul, as with the body, in a certain period of time, it gathereth ill humours, which break out into aguiſh diſtempers at length; ſo the relicks of a ſpiritual diſeaſe, not carried away, will ripen and gather to a head. This ſhould teach us, when we are well, to ſtudy to keep an even courſe, and to watch over the firſt ſtirrings; and likewiſe, if we ſee ſome unevenneſs in our ways, not to cenſure ourſelves or others over harſhly. Exact evenneſs is to be ſtriven after here, but to be enjoyed only in another world.

2. We ſee, by comparing the ſtate of the church here, with the ſtate of it in the third chapter, that where corruption is not thoroughly purged, and a careful watch kept over the ſoul, there, after a recovery, will follow a more dangerous diſtemper; corruption will not only ſtrive for life, but for rule. If there had had been a thorough reformation in the church, after her former trouble, and a thorough cloſing with Chriſt, ſhe would not thus have fallen into a more dangerous condition. We ſee David, in his latter times, falls to numbering of the people; and Sampſon, after he had done great ſervices to the church, at length ſhamefully betrays his ſtrength; and he that ruled others, ſubmits to be ruled by a baſe ſtrumpet. Jonas, for not thoroughly repenting of his ſins, falls after to quarrel with God himſelf. It is beſt therefore to deal thoroughly with our hearts, elſe fleſh unſubdued, will owe us a greater ſhame, and we ſhall diſhonour our own beginnings. Yet this is the comfort, that this will occaſion deeper humility and hatred of ſin in thoſe that are God's, and a faſter cleaving to God than ever before, as we ſee in the church here: afterwards grace will have the better at laſt.

3. We may obſerve the ingenuouſneſs of the church in laying open her own ſtate. It is the diſpoſition of God's people to be ingenuous in opening their ſtate to God, as in David, Nehemiah, Ezra, &c.

The reaſon is this:

1. By a free and full confeſſion, we give God the honour of his wiſdom in knowing of our own condition, ſecret and open; we give him the honour of mercy, that will not take ad-

vantage againſt us; the honour of power, and authority over us, if he ſhould ſhew his ſtrength againſt us. We yield unto him the glory of all his chief prerogatives: whereupon Joſhua moveth Achan to a free confeſſion, "My ſon, give glory to God."

2. We ſhame Satan, who firſt takes away ſhame of ſinning, and then takes away ſhame for ſin; he tempts us not to be aſhamed to do what we are aſhamed to confeſs: ſo we, by ſilence, keep ſatan's counſel againſt our own ſouls. If we accuſe ourſelves, we put him out of office, who is "the accuſer of the brethren."

3. We prevent likewiſe malicious imputations from the world. Auſtin anſwered roundly and well, when he was upbraided with the ſins of his former age: "What thou," ſaith he, "findeſt fault with, I have condemned in myſelf before."

4. This ingenuous dealing eaſeth the ſoul, giving vent to the grief of it. While the arrow's head ſticks in the wound, it will not heal: Sin unconfeſſed is like a broken piece of ruſty iron in the body, it muſt be gotten out, elſe it will, by rankling and feſtering, cauſe more danger. It is like poiſon in the ſtomach, if it be not caſt up, it will infect the whole body. Is it not better to take ſhame to ourſelves now, than to be aſhamed hereafter before angels, devils, and men? How careful is God of us, by this private way to prevent future ſhame?

5. This faithful dealing with ourſelves is often the means of preſent delivery out of any trouble. David, in the 32d Pſalm, ver. 4. was in a great diſtemper both of body and ſpirit; his moiſture was turned into the drought of ſummer. It is thought he made this pſalm between the time of his ſin and his pardon. What courſe taketh he? "I ſaid," ſaith he, that is, "I reſolved to confeſs my ſin, and thou forgaveſt the iniquity of my ſin." Upon a free and full, a faithful and ingenuous confeſſion, without all guile of ſpirit, he found eaſe preſently both in ſoul and body. The cauſe of God's ſevere dealing with us, is, that we ſhould deal ſeverely with ourſelves. The beſt trial of religion in us is, by thoſe actions whereby we reflect on ourſelves, by judging and condemning of ourſelves; for this argueth a ſpirit without guile. Sin and ſhifting came into the world together. The ſubtlety of proud nature, eſpecially in eminency, is ſuch, that ſins may paſs for virtues; becauſe ſin and ſatan are alike in this,

this, they cannot endure to appear in their own colour and habit; and ſo thoſe that oppoſe it ſhall be accounted oppoſers of good. This guile of ſpirit hath no bleſſedneſs belonging to it, take heed of it.

4. Mark further one ſign of a gracious ſoul, to be abaſed for leſſer defects, ſleepineſs and indiſpoſition to good. One would think drowſineſs were no ſuch great matter; O, but the church had ſuch ſweet acquaintance with Chriſt, that every little indiſpoſition that hindered any degree of communion, was grievous to her. You ſhall have a Judas, a Saul, an enormous offender, confeſs great falls that gripe his conſcience; all ſhall be caſt up, that the conſcience being disburdened, may feel a little eaſe: but how few do you ſee humbled for dulneſs of ſpirit, want of love, of zeal, of cheerfulneſs in duty? This, accompanied with ſtrife againſt it, argues a good ſpirit indeed.

A carnal man is not more humbled for groſs ſins, than a gracious chriſtian for wants in good actions, when it is not with him as it hath been, and as he would. The reaſon is, where there is a clear and heavenly light, there leſſer motes are diſcernable: and ſpiritual life is ſenſible of any obſtruction and hindrance. This paſſes in the world for unneceſſary nicety: the world ſtraineth not at theſe gnats: but thoſe upon whoſe hearts the ſun of righteouſneſs hath ſhined, have both a clear ſight and a tender heart.

To come to the words,—"I ſleep." The church fetcheth a compariſon from the body, to expreſs the ſtate of the ſoul. It is one uſe of our body to help us in ſpiritual expreſſions. Whilſt the ſoul dwelleth in the body, it dependeth much in the conceiving of things upon the fancy, and the fancy upon the ſenſes. We come to conceive of ſpiritual ſleep, by ſleep of the body, which we are well enough acquainted with.

The church, as ſhe conſiſts of a double principle, fleſh and ſpirit mingled together in all parts, as darkneſs and light in the twilight and dawning of the day; ſo here ſhe expreſſeth her condition, in regard of either part; ſo far as ſhe was carnal, ſhe ſlept; ſo far as ſhe was ſpiritual, ſhe was awake.

In this mixed condition, the fleſh for the preſent prevailed, yet ſo as the ſpirit had its working; ſhe ſlept, but her heart waked.

The words contain a confeſſion, "I ſleep;" and a correction, "but my heart waketh." She hath a double aſpect; one to the ill, her ſleeping; the other to her good—her heart in ſome degree awaked. The ſpirit of God is a diſcerning ſpirit, it diſcovereth what is fleſh and what is ſpirit.

So that we muſt not conceive this ſleep to be that dead ſleep all men are in by nature; not to be that judicial ſleep, that ſpirit of ſlumber, which is a further degree of that natural ſleep, to which God giveth up ſome, as a ſeal of their deſperate condition; but here is meant that ſleep which ariſeth out of the remainder of corruption unſubdued, and now is here in the church, prevailing over the better part. Fleſh and ſpirit have both their intercourſe in us, as Moſes and Amalek had: unleſs we ſtand upon our guard, the fleſh will get the upper ground, as we ſee here. The beſt are no farther ſafe than they are watchful.

For the clear underſtanding of this, obſerve ſome correſpondence in the reſemblance, wherein too much curioſity is loathſome and fooliſh, and calleth the mind too much from the kernel to the ſhell.

Bodily and ſpiritual ſleep reſemble each other, in the cauſes, in the effects, and in the dangerous iſſue.

1. The ſleep of the body cometh from the obſtruction and binding up of the ſenſes by vapours which ariſe out of the ſtomach: ſo there be ſpiritual fumes of worldly cares and deſires that obſtruct the ſenſes of the ſoul; therefore our bleſſed Saviour counts it a ſpiritual ſurfeiting, when the ſoul is oppreſſed with care about the world—luſts bring the ſoul a-bed. Proſperity is a ſtrong vapour; if it overcome not the brain, yet it weakeneth it, as ſtrong waters do. See it in Solomon himſelf.

2. The diſciples fell aſleep in the garden, when they were oppreſſed with heavineſs and ſorrow, which paſſions will have the like effect upon the ſoul.

3. Sleep ariſeth oft from wearineſs, and want of ſpirits: ſo there is a ſpiritual wearineſs ariſing from diſcouragements, and too much laying out of the ſtrength of the ſoul upon other matters, upon impertinencies that concern not the beſt ſtate of the ſoul.

4. Some are brought aſleep by muſic; ſo many by flattering entice-

enticements and insinuations of others, joining with their own flattering deceitful heart, are cast into a spiritual sleep.

5. Sleep ariseth from want of exercise; when there is a cessation from spiritual exercise about the proper object of it, there followeth a spiritual sleep. Exercise keeps waking.

6. Sleep arises oft from cold diseases, as lethargies from cold gross humours: cold, earthly, gross affections about the things here below, benumb the soul, and bring it into a heavy, drowsy, sleepy temper.

7. Sometimes sleep is caused by some kinds of poison, especially the poison of asps, which kills in sleeping: and do not sinful delights do the like to the soul? insensible evils are the most dangerous evils.

8. At other times, slothful yawning company disposes to sleep: there is no more ordinary cause of spiritual sleep, than conversing with spiritual sluggards, that count it a high point of wisdom not to be forward in religion. These formal proud persons, as they are cold themselves, so they labour to cast water on the heat of others. Nay, those that are otherwise good, if declining in their first love, will incline others to a fellowship in the same secure temper, lest they should be upbraided by the vigilance of others.

1. They are alike in the effects. Men disposed to be asleep, desire to be alone. Those likewise that are disposed to take a spiritual nap, will avoid company, especially of such as would awake them. They will hardly endure rousing means.

2. Men will draw the curtains and shut out the light, when they mean to compose themselves to rest. So when men favour themselves in some ways not allowable, they are afraid to be disquieted by the light: light both discovereth, awaketh, and stirreth up to working; and men, when they are loth to do what they know, are loth to know what they should do. "They that sleep, sleep in the night." Asa, otherwise a good king, shut up the prophet in prison for doing his duty. Much of the anger that men bear against the word laid open to them is, because it will not suffer them to sleep quietly in their sins. Such as will suffer them to live quietly in their sins, they are the quiet and honest men. There cannot be a worse sign than when men will not endure wholesome words; it is a sign they

are in an ill league with that which they ſhould, above all, wage war againſt.

3. In ſleep fancy ruleth, and dreams in fancy. Men in ſleep dream of falſe good, and forget real danger.

Many cheriſh golden dreams; dream of meat, and when they awake, their ſoul is empty. Vain hopes are the dreams of waking men, as vain dreams are of ſleeping carnal men, whoſe life is but a dream.

In ſleep there is no exerciſe of ſenſe or motion: as then men are not ſenſible of good or ill, they move neither to good or ill. Motion followeth ſenſibility: what good we are not ſenſible of, we move not unto. Hence ſleep is of kin to death, for the time depriving us of all ſenſes; and a ſecure profeſſor, in appearance, differs little from a dead profeſſor; both of them are inactive in good, and what they do, they do it without delight, in an uncomely and unacceptable manner, unbecoming the ſtate of a chriſtian. It is all one to have no ſenſes, as not to uſe them. We may ſay of men, in this ſleepy temper, as the ſcripture ſpeaks of idols, "they have eyes and ſee not, ears and hear not," &c.

So likewiſe they are alike in danger. In ſleep, the moſt precious thing men carry about with them, is carried away without reſiſtance; and they are ready to let looſe what they held faſt before, were it ever ſo rich a jewel. And it is ſo in ſpiritual ſleepineſs; men ſuffer the profeſſion of the truth to be wrung from them without much withſtanding; and with letting fall their watch, let fall likewiſe, if not their grace, yet the exerciſe of their graces, and are in danger of being robbed of all.

There is no danger but a man in ſleep is fair for, and expoſed unto: Siſera was ſlain aſleep, and Iſhboſheth at noon day: and there is no temptation, no ſin, no judgement, but a ſecure drowſy chriſtian is open for; which is the ground of ſo oft enforcing watchfulneſs by the ſpirit of God in the ſcriptures. As ſpiritual deadneſs of ſpirit is a cauſe of other ſins, ſo likewiſe it is a puniſhment of them; God poureth a ſpirit of dead ſleep upon men, and cloſeth up their eyes, till ſome heavy judgement falleth upon them; and how many carnal men never awake in this world, till they awake in hell? No wonder, therefore, that ſatan labours to caſt men into a dead ſleep all that he can, and deludes them

them with dreams of a falſe good, that their ſtate is good, and like ſo to continue, that to-morrow ſhall be as to-day; that no danger is near, though God's wrath hangeth over their heads, ready to be revealed from heaven.

Thus we ſee how the reſemblance holds. Some apply this to Conſtantine's time, about three hundred years after Chriſt, when the church, upon peace and plenty, grew ſecure, and ſuffered eccleſiaſtical abuſes to creep in. Religion begat plenty, and the daughter devoured the mother. This made the writers of the eccleſiaſtical ſtories to queſtion, whether the church hath more hurt by open perſecution, or peace, when one chriſtian undermineth and rageth againſt another. Human inventions were ſo multiplied, that not long after, in Auguſtine's time, he complained that the condition of the Jews was more tolerable than theirs; for though the Jews were under burdens, yet they were ſuch as were impoſed by God himſelf, and not human preſumptions. But Gerſon, many hundred years after, increaſeth his complaint. "If, O Auguſtine, thou ſaidſt thus in thy time, what wouldeſt thou have ſaid if thou hadſt lived now? when men, as a toy taketh them in the head, will multiply burdens." And he was not afraid to ſay, that the number of human conſtitutions was ſuch, that if they were obſerved in rigour, the greateſt part of the church would be damned. Thus, whilſt the husbandman ſlept, the envious man ſatan ſlept not, but ſowed his tares. Thus popery grew up by degrees, till it overſpread the church; whilſt the watchmen that ſhould have kept others awake, fell aſleep themſelves. And thus we anſwer the papiſts, when they quarrel with us about the beginning of their errors. They aſk of us when ſuch and ſuch an hereſy began? we anſwer, that thoſe that ſhould have obſerved them were aſleep Popery is a myſtery that crept into the church by degrees under glorious pretences. Their errors had modeſt beginnings. Worſhipping of images aroſe from preſerving the pictures of friends, and after that were brought into the church. Invocation of ſaints aroſe from ſome of the fathers figurative turning of their ſpeech to ſome that were dead. Tranſubſtantiation had riſe from ſome tranſcendent unwary phraſes of the fathers. The papacy itſelf from ſome titles of the Romiſh church and biſhop. Nothing in popery ſo groſs, but had ſome ſmall beginnings, which being neglected by thoſe that ſhould have watched over the church, grew at length unſufferable. No wonder if the papiſts be caſt into a dead ſleep. They have drunk too deep of the whore's cup. They that wor-

ſhip

ſhip images, are, as the ſcripture ſaith, "like unto them, they have eyes and ſee not," &c. They cannot diſcern their errors, though they be never ſo ridiculous and ſenſeleſs, ſuch as prayer in an unknown tongue, and ſuch like.

And upon this ſtate of the church, let us add this caution.

If the beſt be ſo prone to ſleep, then we cannot ſafely at all times build upon their judgement. The fathers of the church were not always awake. There be few of them, but in ſome things we may appeal from themſelves ſleeping, to themſelves waking. The beſt having ſome luſts unſubdued in their affections, may write and ſpeak ſometimes out of the worſt part and principle that is in them, as well as out of the beſt, when they keep not cloſe to the rule.

When our adverſaries preſs us with the authority of the fathers, we appeal to them where they ſpeak adviſedly, and of purpoſe. When they were not awaked by heretics, they ſpeak ſometimes unworthily, and give advantages to heretics that followed. It is the manner of our adverſaries to make the unwarrantable practice of the ancienter time a rule of their practice, and the doubtful opinions of the ancients their own grand tenets. Wherein in both they deal unſafely for themſelves, and injuriouſly towards us, when we, upon grounds, in ſome things diſſent, which liberty, oft when they ſhould not, they will take to themſelves.

But howſoever this ſleepy condition agreeth to the former times of the church, yet I wiſh there were not cauſe to apply it to ourſelves, in this latter age of the church, wherein many of the ancient hereſies are revived; and beſides, the evils that accompany long peace, take hold of us, and will prevail too far, if we do not rouſe up ourſelves. The church is in the commonwealth, and uſually they flouriſh and fall together. When there is a ſleep of the church, for the moſt part there is a ſleep of the ſtate. A civil ſleep is, when in time of danger there is no apprehenſion of danger, and this ſleep is a puniſhment of ſpiritual ſleep, when with Ephraim, a ſtate hath gray hairs, and knoweth it not, when judgements abroad will not awake men; when noiſe and pinching will not awake, the ſleep muſt needs be deep. The whole world almoſt is in combuſtion round about us, and many countries thought themſelves as ſafe a little before their troubles, as we now think ourſelves. If fear of outward dangers will not awake, then ſpiritual dangers will not, as being more

more ſecret and not obvious to ſenſe. No wonder then if few will believe our report of the fearful condition of wicked men in the world to come. A man may be ſtartled and awaked with outward dangers who is ſpiritually ſottiſh; but he that is careleſs of outward danger, will be regardleſs of what we ſay of ſpiritual dangers. The fear of danger may be the greater, when, as it was amongſt the Jews, thoſe that ſhould be watchful themſelves, and awake others, inſtead of awaking, rock the cradle, and cry, "Peace, peace, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord;" yet we muſt never forget to be mindful with thankfulneſs, for peace, and the goſpel of peace, which yet, by God's bleſſing, we enjoy, always ſuſpecting the readineſs of nature to grow ſecure under the abundance of favours, and ſo to bleſs ourſelves in that condition.

1. Now we know that ſleep is creeping upon us, by comparing our preſent condition with our former, when we were in a more wakeful frame, when the graces of God's ſpirit were in exerciſe in us. If we differ from what we were, all is not well.

2. Compare ourſelves again with that ſtate and frame that a chriſtian ſhould be in; for ſometimes a chriſtian goes under an uncomfortable condition, all the dayes of his life, ſo that he is not fit to make himſelf his pattern. The true rule is, that deſcription that is in the word of a waking and living chriſtian, what a man ſhould be, take him at the beſt; the varying from that is a ſleepy eſtate; as for inſtance, a chriſtian ſhould walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghoſt, live and walk by faith, he ſhould depend upon God, and reſiſt temptations. Faith ſhould work by love, and love to ourſelves ſhould move us to honour ourſelves, as members of Chriſt, to diſdain to defile ourſelves by ſin: our hope, if it be waking, will purge us and make us ſuitable to the condition we hope for in heaven, and the company we hope to have fellowſhip with there.

3. Again, look to the examples of others that are more gracious. I have as many encouragements to be thankful to God, and fruitful: they enjoy no more means then I, and yet they abound in aſſurance, are comfortable in all conditions: I am caſt down in a little trouble, ſubject to paſſion, to barrenneſs, and diſtruſt, as if there were no promiſes of God made to ſowing in righteouſneſs. Thus a man may diſcern he is aſleep, by comparing himſelf with others that are better than himſelf.

4. Again,

4. Again, it is evident that we are growing on to a ſleepy condition by this,—when we find a backwardneſs to ſpiritual duties, as to prayer, thankſgiving, and ſpiritual conference. It ſhould be the joy of a chriſtian (as it is his prerogative) to come into the preſence of Chriſt, and to be enabled to do that which is above himſelf. When what is ſpiritual in a duty will not go down with us, it is a ſign our ſouls are in a ſleepy temper. There is not a proportion between the ſoul and the buſineſs in heavenly duties. Whom do we ſpeak to but God? whom do we hear ſpeak in the word but God? what ſhould be the temper of thoſe that ſpeak to God, and hear him ſpeak to them? It ſhould be regardful, reverent, obſervant. Thoſe that are watchful to the eye of a prince, what obſervance they ſhew, when they are to receive any thing from him, or to put up any requeſt to him!—"Offer this to thy king," ſaith the Lord by Malachi, when a man comes drowſily to God to ſacrifice, to hear, to pray, &c. Offer this carriage to man, will he take it at thy hands? Oh the mercy of our patient God, that will endure ſuch ſervices as we moſt frequently perform! By this indiſpoſedneſs to duty more or leſs, we may diſcover our ſleepineſs.

5. When the ſoul begins to admire outward excellencies; when it awakes much to profits, pleaſures, and honours; when men admire great men, rich men, great places, the ſtrength and fat of the ſoul is conſumed by feeding on theſe things; ſo that when it comes to ſpiritual things, it muſt needs be faint and drowſy. By theſe, and the like ſigns, let us labour to ſearch the ſtate of our ſouls.

1. And to ſtir us up the more, conſider the danger of a ſecure ſleepy eſtate. There is no ſin but a man is expoſed unto in a ſecure eſtate; therefore the devil labours all he can to caſt men into this temper, which he muſt do before he can make him fall into any groſs ſin. When he is aſleep, he is in a fit frame for any ill action; he is in a temper fit for the devil to work upon, to bring into any dream or error, to inflame the fancies and conceits with outward excellencies. The devil hath a faculty this way to make outward things great that are nothing worth; and to make ſuch ſins little, as, if we were awake, would affright us. He works ſtrongeſt upon the fancy, when the ſoul is ſleepy, or a little drowſy.

There is no man that comes to groſs ſins ſuddenly, but he falls by

by little and little—firſt to ſlumber, and from ſlumber to ſleep, and from ſleep to ſecurity, and ſo from one degree to another.—It is the inlet to all ſins, and the beginning of all danger; therefore the Lord takes a contrary courſe with his, when he would preſerve a ſtate or perſon, he plants in them firſt a ſpirit of faith to believe that there is ſuch a danger, or ſuch a good to be apprehended, upon watching and going on in a courſe befitting that condition, and then faith (if it be a matter of threatening) ſtirs up fear, which maketh up care and diligence. This is God's method, when he intends the preſervation of any.

2. A man in his ſleep is fit to loſe all; a ſleepy hand lets any thing go with eaſe. A man hath grace and comfort, he lets it go in his ſpiritual ſleepineſs, grace in a great meaſure, and the ſenſe and comfort of it altogether. A chriſtian hath always the divine nature in him that works in ſome degree; yet, notwithſtanding, in regard of his preſent temper and feeling, he may be in ſuch a caſe, that he ſhall differ nothing from a reprobate; nay, he may come to feel more than an ordinary wicked man feels, while he lives in the world, as divers good chriſtians do. And all this through their careleſſneſs, that they ſuffer themſelves to be robbed of firſt beginnings, by yielding to delights, company and contentments; feeding their conceits with carnal excellencies; ſo favouring corruptions and flattering, which is naught in them, they loſe the comfort of all that is good. Who would do this for the gaining of a little broken ſleep? I ſay broken ſleep; for the better a man is, the more unquietly ſhall he ſleep in ſuch a ſtate, he ſhall feel ſtartings and frights in the midſt of his carnal delights, if he belong to God.

3. Beſides, God meets them with ſome croſſes in this world, ſo that they ſhall gain nothing by it. There is none of God's children that ever gained by yielding to any corruption, or drowſineſs, though God ſaved their ſouls. It is always true, a ſecure ſtate is a ſure forerunner of ſome great croſs, or of ſome great ſin. God cannot endure ſuch a temper of ſoul, lifeleſs and unfeeling performances and ſacrifices, to him that hath given us ſuch encouragements. It muſt needs be diſtaſteful to God when we go drowſily and heavily about his work. "Curſed is he that doth the work of the Lord negligently," Jer. xlviii. 10. If it were to ſheath his ſword in the bowels of his enemy, (to which man is exceedingly prone) yet if it be not done with diligence, and an eye to God, a man is curſed in it.

4. And,

4. And it is an odious temper to God; for doth not he deſerve chearful ſervice at our hands? hath he been a wilderneſs to us? doth he not deſerve the marrow of our ſouls? doth not his greatneſs require it at our hands, that our ſenſes be all waking? and doth not his mercy deſerve, that our love ſhould take all care to ſerve him that is ſo gracious and good to us? Is it not the fruit of our redemption to ſerve him without fear, in holineſs and righteouſneſs, all the days of our lives?

5. It is a ſtate not only odious to God, but irkſome to our own ſpirits. The conſcience is never fully at peace in a drowſy ſtate, or in drowſy performances. Likewiſe, it is not graceful to others; it breeds not love in them to good things, but diſlike. Carnal men, let them ſee a chriſtian not carry himſelf waking as he ſhould, though they be a thouſand times worſe themſelves, yet, notwithſtanding, they think it ſhould not be ſo; ſuch a courſe doth not ſuit with ſo much knowledge and ſo much grace.

Let a man conſider, wherefore God hath given the powers of the ſoul and the graces of the ſpirit, are they not given for exerciſe, and to be employed about their proper objects? A man is not a man, a chriſtian is not a chriſtian, when he is not waking; he ſo far degenerates from himſelf, as he yields unto any unbecoming carriage. Wherefore hath God given us underſtanding, but to conceive the beſt things: wherefore have we judgment, but to judge aright between the things of heaven and earth? wherefore have we love planted in us, but to ſet it on lovely objects? wherefore faith, but to truſt God above all? wherefore have we affections, but for ſpiritual things? When therefore our affections are dull, and loſe their edge to theſe things, being quick only to earthly things, what a temper is this? how doth a man anſwer his creation, the ſtate of a new creature? Wherefore are all graces planted in the ſoul, as faith and love, and hope and patience; but to be in exerciſe, and waking; to have theſe, and let them ſleep and lie unexerciſed, ſo far a chriſtian forgets himſelf, and is not himſelf. A chriſtian as a chriſtian, that is, in his right temper, ſhould be in the act and exerciſe of what is good in him, upon all occaſions; as we ſay of God, he is a pure act, becauſe he is always in working. The ſpirit of God is a pure act, in whom is no ſuffering, but all action about that which is fit for ſo glorious a nature. So it is with the ſpirit of a man that hath the ſpirit of God; he is in act, in exerciſe, and operation: as the ſpirit is more or leſs in him, ſo he is more

more or leſs fruitful. What a world of good might chriſtians do, if they were in a right temper? what a deal of ill might they eſcape and avoid that they lie in, if they would rouſe up their ſouls to be as chriſtians ſhould be? and, as their ſoul and conſcience tells them, they ought and might be, did they rightly improve the means they have?

SERMON IV.

CANTICLES v. 2.

" I ſleep, but my heart waketh," &c.

THE words, as it hath been ſhewn, contain a confeſſion, " I ſleep," and a correction, " my heart waketh." The confeſſion hath been handled, now ſomething of the correction or exception.

My heart waketh.

The word heart, you know, includes the whole ſoul, for the underſtanding is the heart—" an underſtanding heart." To lay things up in our hearts, there it is memory; and to cleave in heart, is to cleave in will. To rejoice in heart, that is, in the affection; ſo that all the powers of the ſoul, the inward man, as Paul calls it, is the heart.

I ſleep, but my heart waketh.

Indeed, the church might have ſaid, My heart ſleepeth, but my heart waketh; for it is the ſame faculty, the ſame power of the ſoul, both in the ſtate of corruption, and of grace, in which the ſoul is; as in the twilight, we cannot ſay this is light, and that is darkneſs, becauſe there is ſuch a mixture. In all the powers of the ſoul there is ſomething good, and ſomething ill, ſomething fleſh, and ſomething ſpirit. The heart was aſleep, and likewiſe was awake—" I ſleep, but my heart waketh." You ſee here, then, in this correction, 1. That a chriſtian hath two principles in him, that which is good, and that which is evil, whence

whence iſſueth the weakneſs of his actions and affections: They are all mixed, as are the principles from which they come forth. We may obſerve farther, that a chriſtian may know how it is with himſelf, though he be mixed of fleſh and of ſpirit; he hath a diſtinguiſhing knowledge and judgement, whereby he knows both the good and evil in himſelf. In a dungeon, where is nothing but darkneſs, both on the eye that ſhould ſee, and on that which ſhould be ſeen, he can ſee nothing; but where there is a ſupernatural principle, where there is this mixture, there the light of the ſpirit ſearcheth the dark corners of the heart. A man that hath the ſpirit knoweth both, he knoweth himſelf and his own heart. The ſpirit hath a light of its own, even as reaſon hath: how doth reaſon know what it doth? By a reflex act inbred in the ſoul. Shall a man that is natural reflect upon his ſtate, and know what he knows, what he thinks, what he doth; and may not the ſoul, that is raiſed to a higher eſtate, know as much? undoubtedly it may. Beſides, we have the ſpirit of God, which is light, and ſelf evidencing; it ſhews unto us, where it is, and what it is. The work of the ſpirit may ſometimes be hindered, as in times of temptation; then, I confeſs, a man may look wholly upon corruption, and ſo miſtake himſelf, by judging of that which he ſees preſent in himſelf, and not by the other principle, which is concealed for a time from him. But a chriſtian, when he is not in ſuch a temptation, he knows his own eſtate, and can diſtinguiſh between the principles in him, of the fleſh and ſpirit, grace and nature.

Again we ſee here, in that the church ſaith, "but my heart waketh," that ſhe doth acknowledge there is good as well as evil. As the church is ingenuous to confeſs that which is amiſs, "I ſleep," ſo ſhe is as true in confeſſing that which is good in herſelf, "but my heart waketh;" which yields us another obſervation.

We ſhould as well acknowledge that which is good, as that which is evil in our hearts.

Becauſe we muſt not bear falſe witneſs, as not againſt others, much leſs againſt ourſelves. Many help Satan the accuſer, and plead his cauſe againſt the ſpirit, their comforter, in refuſing to ſee what God ſeeth in them. We muſt make conſcience of this, to know the good as well as the evil, though it be never ſo little.

To

To be particular, What is the good the church here confeſſeth, when ſhe ſaith, that her heart waketh? She, in her ſleepy eſtate, firſt hath her judgement ſound in that which is truth of perſons, things, and courſes. Chriſtians are not ſo benighted when they ſleep, or given up to ſuch a reprobate judgement, as that they diſcern not differences: they can diſcern that ſuch are in a good way, and ſuch are not; that ſuch means are good, and ſuch are not. A chriſtian oft times is forced to do work out of judgement, in caſe his affections are aſleep, or diſtracted; and ſuch works are approved of God, as they come from a right judgement and conviction, though the evil of them be chaſtiſed.

But all is not in the judgement. The child of God aſleep hath a working in the will, chooſing the better part, which he will cleave to; he hath a general purpoſe to pleaſe God in all things, and no ſettled purpoſe in particular for to ſleep thus: anſwerable to his judgement therefore, he chooſeth the better part and ſide, he owns God and his cauſe even in evil times, cleaving in reſolution of heart to the beſt ways, though with weakneſs.

Take David in his ſleepy time, between his repentance and his foul ſin; if one ſhould have aſked him what he thought of the ways of God, and of the contrary? he would have given you an anſwer out of ſound judgement, thus and thus: if you ſhould have aſked him what courſe he would have followed in his choice, reſolution and purpoſe, he would have anſwered favourily.

3. Again, there remaineth affection anſwerable to their judgement, which, though they find, and feel it not for a time, it being perhaps ſcattered, yet there is a ſecret love to Chriſt, and to his cauſe and ſide, joined with joy in the welfare of the church and people of God, rejoicing in the proſperity of the righteous, with a ſecret grief for the contrary. The pulſe will beat this way, and good affections will diſcover themſelves; take him in his ſleepy eſtate, the judgement is ſound in the main, the will, the affections, the joy, the delight, the ſorrow; this is an evidence his heart is awake.

4. The conſcience likewiſe is awake; the heart is taken oft times for the conſcience in ſcripture; a good conſcience (called a merry heart) is a continual feaſt. Now the conſcience of God's children is never ſo ſleepy but it awaketh in ſome comfortable meaſure, though perhaps it may be deadened in a particular act,

yet notwithſtanding there is ſo much life in it, as upon ſpeech or conference, &c. there will be an opening of it, and a yielding at length to the ſtrength of ſpiritual reaſon, his conſcience is not ſeared; David was but a little rouſed by Nathan, yet you ſee how he preſently confeſſed ingenuouſly that he had ſinned; ſo when he had numbered the people, his conſcience preſently ſmote him; and when he reſolved to kill Nabal and all his family, which was a wicked and carnal paſſion, in which there was nothing but fleſh, yet when he was ſtopped by the advice and the diſcreet counſel of Abigal, we ſee how preſently he yielded. There is a kind of perpetual tenderneſs of conſcience in God's people; all the difference is, of more or leſs.

5. Anſwerable to theſe inward powers is the outward obedience of God's children; in their ſleepy eſtate they go on in a courſe of obedience, though deadly and coldly, and not with that glory that may give others good example, or yield themſelves comfort; yet there is a courſe of good duties; his ordinary way is good, howſoever he may ſtep aſide, his fits may be ſleepy when his eſtate is waking. We muſt diſtinguiſh between a ſtate and a fit, a man may have an aguiſh fit in a ſound body; the ſtate of a chriſtian is a waking ſtate in the inward man; the by-courſes into which he falls, are fits, out of which he recovers himſelf.

Uſe 1. Whence, for uſe, let us magnify the goodneſs of God, that will remain by his ſpirit, and let it ſtay to preſerve life in ſuch hearts as ours are, ſo prone to ſecurity and ſleepineſs, let it put us in mind of other like merciful and gracious doings of our God for us; that he gave his ſpirit to us when we had nothing good in us, when it met with nothing but enmity, rebellion, indiſpoſedneſs; Nay, conſider how he debaſed himſelf and became man, in being united to our frail fleſh after an admirable nearneſs, and all out of mercy to ſave us.

Uſe 2. If ſo be that Satan ſhall tempt us on ſuch occaſions, let us enter into our own ſouls, and ſearch the truth of grace, our judgement, our wills, our conſtant courſe of obedience, and the inward principle whence it comes, that we may be able to ſtand in the time of temptation. What upheld the church, but this reflex act by the help of the ſpirit, that ſhe was able to judge of the good as well as the ill. Thus David, "The deſires of our ſouls are towards thee, and though all this have befallen us, yet have we not forgotten thy name," Pſal. xliv. 20. This will enable

enable us to appeal to God, as Peter, "Lord thou knoweſt I love thee," it is an evidence of a good eſtate.

My heart waketh.

God's children never totally fall from grace; though they ſleep, yet their heart is awake The Prophet Iſaiah, ſpeaking of the church and children of God, Iſa. vi. 13. ſaith, "it ſhall be as a tree, as an oak, whoſe ſubſtance is in them when they caſt their leaves." Though you ſee neither fruit nor leaves, yet there is life in the root, "The ſeed remains in them," there is always a ſeed remaining, it is an immortal ſeed that we are begotten by. Peter when he denied his maſter, was like an oak that was weather-beaten, yet there was life ſtill in the root; for queſtionleſs, Peter loved Chriſt from his heart. Sometimes a chriſtian may be in ſuch a poor caſe as that the ſpiritual life runneth all to the heart, and the outward man is left quite deſtitute; as in wars, when the enemy hath conquered the field, the people run into the city, and if they be beaten out of the city, they run into the caſtle: the grace of God ſometimes fails in the outward action in the field, when yet it retireth to the heart, in which fort it is impregnable, "My heart waketh."

When the outward man ſleeps, and there are weak and dull performances, and perhaps actions amiſs too, yet notwithſtanding the heart waketh: as we ſee in a ſwoon or great fright, the blood, ſpirits, and life, though they leave the face and hands, &c. yet they are in the heart; it is ſaid in the ſcripture, of Eutychus, "his life is in him ſtill, though he ſeemed to be dead." As Chriſt ſaid of Lazarus, ſo a man may ſay of a chriſtian in his worſt ſtate, his life is in him ſtill, he is not dead but ſleeps, his heart waketh.

This is a ſound doctrine and comfortable, agreeable to ſcripture and the experience of God's people; we muſt not loſe it therefore, but make uſe of it againſt the time of temptation. There are ſome pulſes that diſcover life in the ſickeſt man, ſo are there ſome breathings and ſpiritual motions of heart that will comfort in ſuch times. Theſe two never fail on God's part, his love which is unchangeable, and his grace a fruit of his love; and two on our part, the impreſſion of that love, and the gracious work of the new creature, "Chriſt never dies" ſaith the Apoſtle; as he never dies in himſelf, (after his reſurrection), ſo he never dies in his children, there is always ſpiritual life.

My heart waketh.

This is a ſecret of God's ſanctuary, only belonging to God's people, others have nothing to do with it; they ſhall ever love God, and God will ever love them. The Apoſtle, 1 Cor. xiv. 8. ſaith "Love never fails." Gifts you know ſhall be aboliſhed, becauſe the manner of knowing we now uſe ſhall ceaſe, "we ſee through a glaſs, &c. but love abideth." Doth our love to God abide for ever, and doth not his love to us, whence it cometh? ours is but a reflection of God's love. Let us comfort ourſelves therefore in this for the time to come, that in all the uncertainty of things in this life, we have to-day, and loſe to-morrow, as we ſee in Job, there is ſomewhat a ſaint may build on that is conſtant and immoveable; "I am the Lord, I change not, therefore you ſons of Jacob are not conſumed." God ſhould deny himſelf as it were, which he cannot do, and his own conſtant nature, if he ſhould vary this way.

A chriſtian is what his heart and inward man is. It is a true ſpeech of divines, God and nature begin there. Art begins with the face and outward lineaments, as hypocriſy, outward painting, and expreſſions; But grace at the centre, and from thence goes to the circumference; and therefore the church values herſelf here by the diſpoſition and temper of her heart. Thus I am for my outward carriage, &c. "I ſleep, but my heart waketh."

Therefore let us enter into our conſciences and ſouls for the trial of our eſtates. How it is with our judgements? Do we allow of the ways of God, and of the law of the inward man? How is it with our affections, are they bent to good things? How with our hatred, our zeal? Is it not more for outward things than for inward? We know what Jehu ſaid to Jonadab, when he would have him into his chariot, "Is thine heart as mine, then come to me?" So ſaith Chriſt, is thine heart as mine, then give me thy hand; but firſt God muſt have our hearts and then our hands; a man otherwiſe is but a ghoſt in religion, which goes up and down without a ſpirit of its own, like a picture that hath an outſide, and is nothing within. Therefore eſpecially let us look to our hearts. "Oh that there were ſuch a heart in this people" (ſaith God to Moſes) "to fear me always for their good." This is what God's children deſire, that their hearts may be aright ſet; "Waſh thy heart, O Jeruſalem" (ſaith the Prophet) "from thy wickedneſs," &c. Indeed all the outward man depends upon this, therefore ſatan, if he can get this fort, the

is safe, and so satan's vicar. It was a watch-word that was in the time of Gregory XIII, in Queen Elizabeth's days, My son, give me thy heart, dissemble, go to church, and do what you will, but be in heart a Papist, and go where you will. God is not content with the heart alone, (the devil knows, if he have the heart he hath all; but God, as he made all, both soul and body, will have all) but yet in times of temptation, the chief trial is in the heart.

And from hence we have a main difference between one christian and another. A sound christian doth what he doth from the heart, he begins the work there; what good he doth, he loves in his heart first, judgeth it to be good, and then he doth it.

A hypocrite doth what he doth outwardly, and allows not inwardly of that good he doth; he would do ill, and not good, if it were in his choice. The good that he doth is for by-ends, for correspondence, or dependence upon others, or conformity with the times, to cover his designs under the formality of religion, that he may not be known outwardly as he is inwardly, an Atheist and hypocrite. So he hath false aims, his heart is not directed to a right mark. But it is otherwise with God's child, whatsoever good he doth, is in his heart first; whatsoever ill he abstains from, he doth it from his heart, judging it to be naught, therefore he hates it, and will not do it. Here is a main difference of the church from all others, it wakes in the heart though the outward man sleeps; but other men's hearts sleep when they wake, as you know, some men will walk and do many things in their sleep. A hypocrite is such a kind of man, he walks and goes up and down, but his heart is asleep, he knows not what he doth, nor doth he the thing out of judgement or love, but as one asleep as it were, he hath no inward affection unto the things he doth. A christian is the contrary, his heart is awake when he is asleep.

Another difference from the words, you may have thus.—A christian, by the power of God's spirit in him, is sensible of the contrarieties in him, complains, and is ashamed for the same; but a hypocrite is not so, he is not sensible of his sleepiness; "I sleep," (saith the church), so much as the church saith she slept, so much she did not sleep; for a man that is asleep cannot say he is asleep, nor a dead man that he is dead; "So far as he saith he is asleep, he is awake;" now the church confesseth that she was asleep, by that part which was awake in her; other men do

not complain, are not ſenſible of their ſleepineſs and ſlumbering, but compoſe themſelves to ſlumber, and ſeek darkneſs, which is a friend to ſleep; they would willingly be ignorant to keep their conſcience dull and dumb as much as they can, that it may not upbraid them. This is the diſpoſition of a carnal man, he is not ſenſible of his eſtate, as here the church is.

A waking ſtate is a bleſſed ſtate.

The church you ſee ſupports and comforts herſelf that ſhe was waking in her inward man, and that ſhe was happy in that reſpect.

Queſt.—How ſhall we do to keep and preſerve our ſouls in this waking condition, eſpecially in theſe drowſy times?

Anſ.—1. Propound unto them waking conſiderations. What cauſeth our ſleep, but want of matter of more ſerious obſervation? None will ſleep, when a thing is preſented of excellency more than ordinary. To ſee and know, and think of what a ſtate we are advanced to in Chriſt, what we ſhall be ere long, yea, the fearful eſtate we ſhould be in if God leave us to ourſelves? a ſtate of aſtoniſhment, miſerable and wretched beyond ſpeech, nay beyond conceit. Thus did the bleſſed ſouls in former times exerciſe their thoughts, raiſe and ſtir them up by meditation, that ſo they might hold their ſouls in a high eſteem of the beſt things, and not ſuffer them to ſleep. We never fall aſleep in earthly and carnal delights, till the ſoul let go its hold of the beſt things, and ceaſeth to think of and to wonder at them. What made Moſes to fall from the delights of Egypt? he ſaw the baſeſt things in religion were greater than the greateſt things in the court, yea in the world. 'He eſteemed the reproach of Chriſt better than the greateſt treaſures of Egypt."

Make the heart think of the ſhortneſs and vanity of this life, with the uncertainty of the time of our death, and of what wondrous conſequence it is to be in the ſtate of grace before we die. The uncertainty of the gales of grace, that there may be a good hour, which if we paſs, we may never have the like again. As the angel deſcended at a certain hour into the pool of Bethesda, when thoſe that entered not immediately after, went away ſick as they came; ſo there are certain good hours, which let us not neglect, this will help to keep us waking. The neceſſity of grace, and then the free diſpenſing of it in God's good time, and with all the terror of the Lord's day, "Remembering" (ſaith St. Paul) "the terror of the Lord, I labour to ſtir up all men," &c. Indeed

deed it ſhould make us ſtir up our hearts when we conſider the terror of the Lord, to think that ere long we ſhall be all drawn to an exact account before a ſtrict and preciſe judge; and ſhall our eyes then be ſleeping and careleſs? Theſe and ſuch like conſiderations out of ſpiritual wiſdom we ſhould propound to ourſelves, that ſo we might have waking ſouls, and preſerve them in a right temper.

2. The ſoul is, as the object is that is preſented to it, and as the certainty is of the apprehenſions of that object. It conduceth much, therefore, to the awakening of the ſoul, to keep faith awake. It is not the greatneſs alone, but the preſence of great things that ſtirs us: now, it is the nature of faith to make things powerfully preſent to the ſoul; for, it ſets things before us in the word of Jehovah, who made all things of nothing, and is Lord of his word, to give a being to every thing he hath ſpoken. Faith is an awakening grace; keep that awake, and it will keep all other graces waking.

When a man believes that all theſe things ſhall be on fire ere long, that heaven and earth ſhall fall in pieces, that we ſhall be called to give an account, before that time we may be taken away; is it not a wonder we ſtand ſo long, when cities, ſtone walls fall, and kingdoms come to ſudden periods? When faith apprehends, and ſets this to the eye of the ſoul, it affects the ſame marvellouſly; therefore, let faith ſet before the ſoul ſome preſent thoughts, according to its temper, ſometimes terrible things to awaken it out of its dullneſs; ſometimes glorious things, promiſes, and mercies, to wake it out of its ſadneſs, &c. When we are in a proſperous ſtate, let faith make preſent all the ſins and temptations that uſually accompany ſuch an eſtate, as pride, ſecurity, ſelf-applauſe, and the like: If, in adverſity, think alſo of what ſins may beſet us there, this will awaken up ſuch graces in us, as are ſuitable to ſuch an eſtate, for the preventing of ſuch ſins and temptations, and ſo keep our hearts in exerciſe to godlineſs; than which nothing will more prevent ſleeping.

3. And withal, labour for abundance of the ſpirit of God; for what makes men ſleepy and drouſy? the want of ſpirits; we are dull and overladen with groſs humours, whereby the ſtrength ſinks and fails. Chriſtians ſhould know, that there is a neceſſity, if they will keep themſelves waking, to keep them-

ſelves ſpiritual. Pray for the ſpirit above all things, it is the life of our life, the ſoul of our ſoul. What is the body without the ſoul, or the ſoul without the ſpirit of God? even a dead lump. And let us keep ourſelves in ſuch good ways, as we may expect the preſence of the ſpirit to be about us, which will keep us awake.

4. We muſt keep ourſelves in as much light as may be; for all ſleepineſs comes with darkneſs. Let us keep our ſouls in a perpetual light, when any dark thought ariſeth; upon yielding thereunto comes a ſleepy temper. Sleepineſs in the affections, ariſeth from darkneſs of judgment; the more we labour to increaſe our knowledge, and the more the ſpiritual light and beams of it ſhine in at our windows, the better it will be for us, and the more ſhall we be able to keep awake. What makes men, in their corruptions, to avoid the miniſtry of the word, or any thing that may awake their conſcience? It is the deſire they have to ſleep; they are aware, that the more they know, the more they muſt practiſe, or elſe they muſt have a galled conſcience. They ſee religion will not ſtand with their ends; rich they muſt be, and great they will be; but if they ſuffer the light to grow upon them, that will tell them they muſt not riſe and be great, by theſe and ſuch courſes. A gracious heart will be deſirous of ſpiritual knowledge eſpecially, and not care how near the word comes; becauſe they ingenuouſly and freely deſire to be ſpiritually better; they make all things in the world yield to the inward man; they deſire to know their own corruptions and evils more and more, and therefore love the light, "as children of the light and of the day," 1 Theſſ. v. Sleep is a work of darkneſs; men therefore of dark and drowſy hearts, deſire darkneſs for that very end, that their conſciences may ſleep.

5. Labour to preſerve the ſoul in the fear of God; becauſe fear is a waking affection, yea one of the moſt wakeful: for, naturally, we are more moved with dangers, than ſtirred up with hopes; therefore, that affection which is moſt converſant about danger, is the moſt rouſing and waking affection. Preſerve therefore the fear of God by all means. It is one character of a chriſtian, who, when he hath loſt almoſt all grace, to his feeling, yet the fear of God is always left with him; he fears ſin, and the reward of it; and therefore God makes that awe the bond of the new covenant, "I will put my fear into their hearts,

hearts, that they ſhall never depart from me." One chriſtian is better than another, by how much more he wakes and fears more than another. Of all chriſtians, mark thoſe are moſt gracious, ſpiritual, and heavenly, that are the moſt awful, and careful of their ſpeeches, courſes, and demeanors; tender, even of offending God in little things. You ſhall not have light and common oaths come from them, nor unſavoury ſpeeches. Sometimes a good chriſtian may, in a ſtate of ſleepineſs, be faulty ſome way; but he grows in the knowledge of the greatneſs of God, and the experience of his own infirmities, as he grows in the ſenſe of the love of God. He is afraid to loſe that ſweet communion any way, or to grieve the ſpirit of God: Therefore, always as a man grows in grace, he grows in awfulneſs, and in jealouſy of his own corruptions. Therefore, let us preſerve, by all means, this awful affection, the fear of God: let us then often ſearch the ſtate of our own ſouls, our going backward or forward, how it is between God and our ſouls; how fit we are to die, and to ſuffer—how fit for the times that may befal us? Let us examine the ſtate of our own ſouls, which will preſerve us in a waking ſtate; eſpecially examine ourſelves in regard of the ſins of the place, and the times where we live; of the ſins of our own inclination, how we ſtand affected and biaſſed in all thoſe reſpects, and ſee how jealous we are of dangers in this kind. Thoſe that will keep waking ſouls, muſt conſider the danger of the place where they live, and the times, what ſins reign, what ſins ſuch a company as they converſe with are ſubject unto, and their own weakneſs to be led away with ſuch temptations. This jealouſy is a branch of that fear which we ſpake of before, ariſing from the ſearching of our own hearts. It is a notable means to keep us awake, when we keep our hearts in fear of ſuch ſins, as either by calling, cuſtom, company, or the time we live in, or by our own diſpoſition, we are prone to.

There is no chriſtian, but he hath ſome ſpecial ſin to which he is more prone than to another, one way or other, either by courſe of life, or complexion. Here now is the care and watchfulneſs of a chriſtian ſpirit, that knowing by examination and trial of his own heart, his weakneſs, he doth eſpecially fence againſt that, which he is moſt inclined to; and is able to ſpeak moſt againſt that ſin of all others, and to bring the ſtrongeſt argument to diſhearten others from the practice of it.

6. In

6. In the laſt place, it is a thing of no ſmall conſequence, that we keep company with waking and faithful chriſtians, ſuch as neither ſleep themſelves, or do willingly ſuffer any to ſleep that are near them.

It is a report, and a true one, of the ſweating ſickneſs, that they that were kept awake by thoſe that were with them eſcaped; but the ſickneſs was deadly, if they were ſuffered to ſleep. It is one of the beſt fruits of the communion of ſaints, and of our ſpiritual good acquaintance, to keep one another awake. It is an unpleaſing work on both ſides: but we ſhall one day cry out againſt all them that have pleaſed themſelves and us, in rocking us aſleep, and thank thoſe that have pulled us with fear out of the fire, though againſt our wills.

Let us labour upon our own hearts in the conſcionable uſe of all theſe means, in their ſeveral times and ſeaſons, that we may keep our hearts waking, and the more earneſt ought we to be from the conſideration of the preſent age and ſeaſon in which we live.

Certainly a drowſy temper is the moſt ordinary temper in the world: for, would men ſuffer idle words, yea, filthy and rotten talk, to come from their mouths, if they were awake? Would a waking man run into a pit, or upon a ſword's point? A man that is aſleep may do any thing. What do men mean when they fear not to lie, diſſemble, and ruſh upon the pikes of God's diſpleaſure? When they ſay one thing, and do another? are they not dead? or take them at the beſt, are they not aſleep? Were they awake, would they ever do thus? Will not a fowl that hath wings avoid the ſnare, or will a beaſt run into a pit when he ſees it? There is a ſnare laid in your play-houſes, gaming-houſes, common-houſes that gentlemen frequent, that generally profeſs religion, and take the communion. If the eye of their ſouls were awake, would they run into theſe ſnares, that their own conſciences tell them are ſo? If there be any goodneſs in their ſouls, it is wondrous ſleepy: There is no man, even the beſt, but may complain of ſomething, that they are overtaken in the contagion of theſe infectious times; they catch drowſy tempers, as our Saviour ſaith, of thoſe latter times: "For the abundance of iniquity, the love of many ſhall wax cold." A chill temper grows ever from the coldneſs of the times that we live in, wherein the beſt may complain of coldneſs, but there

is

is a great difference. The life of many, we ſee, is continual ſleep.

Let us eſpecially watch over ourſelves in the uſe of liberty, and ſuch things as are in themſelves lawful. It is a bleſſed ſtate, when a chriſtian carries himſelf ſo in his liberty, that his heart condemns him, not for the abuſe of that which it alloweth, and juſtly in a moderate uſe. Recreations are lawful—who denies it? To refreſh a man's ſelf, is not only lawful but neceſſary. God knew it well enough; therefore hath allotted time for ſleep and the like. But we muſt not turn recreation into a calling, to ſpend too much time in it.

Where there is leaſt fear, there is always moſt danger. Now becauſe in lawful things there is leaſt fear, we are there in moſt danger. It is true, for the moſt part, more men periſh in the church of God by the abuſe of lawful things, than by unlawful, more by meat than by poiſon; becauſe every man takes heed of poiſon, ſeeing he knows the venom of it: but how many men ſurfeit and die by meat? So many men die by lawful things, they eternally periſh in the abuſe of their liberties, more than in groſs ſins. Therefore let us keep awake, that we may carry ourſelves ſo in our liberties, that we condemn not ourſelves in the uſe of them. We will conclude this point with the meditation of the excellency of a waking chriſtian. He is an excellent perſon, fit for all trials, he is then impregnable—ſatan hath nothing to do with him; for he, as it is ſaid, is then a wiſe man, and hath his eyes in his head; he knows himſelf, his ſtate, his enemies, his adverſaries, the ſnares of proſperity and adverſity, and of all conditions. Therefore, he being awake, is not overcome by the evil of any condition, and is ready for the good of any eſtate. He that hath a waking ſoul, he ſees all the advantages of good, and all the ſnares that draw him to ill. What a bleſſed eſtate is this? In all things therefore watch—in all ſtates, in all times, and in all actions. There is a danger in every thing without watchfulneſs. There is a ſcorpion under every ſtone, as the proverb is, a ſnare under every bleſſing of God, and in every condition, which ſatan uſeth as a weapon to hurt us. Adverſity to diſcourage us, proſperity to puff us up. When, if a chriſtian hath not a waking ſoul, ſatan hath him in his ſnares; in proſperity, to be proud and ſecure; in adverſity, to murmur, repine, be dejected, and call God's providence into queſtion. When a chriſtian

an hath a heart, and grace to awake, then his love, his patience, his faith is awake, as it ſhould be; he is fit for all conditions, to do good in them, and to take good by them.

Let us therefore labour to preſerve watchful and waking hearts continually, that ſo we may be fit to live and die, and to appear before the judgment ſeat of God; to do what we ſhould do, and ſuffer what we ſhould ſuffer, being formed for all eſtates.

SERMON V.

CANTICLES v. 11.

" *It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, ſaying, Open to me,*
" *my ſiſter, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled*
" *with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.*"

HITHERTO, by God's aſſiſtance, we have heard largely, both of the church's ſleeping and heart-waking. What this ſleeping and heart-waking is—how it comes; the trials of theſe oppoſite diſpoſitions; of the danger of ſleeping, and excellency of heart-waking; and of the help and means both to ſhun the one, and preſerve the other. Now the church having ſo freely and ingenuouſly confeſſed what ſhe could againſt herſelf, proceeds yet further to acquaint us with the particulars, in her heart-waking diſpoſition, which were two-fold: ſhe heard and diſcerned the voice of her beloved, who, for all her ſleep, was her beloved's ſtill: and more than that, ſhe remembers all his ſweet words and allurements, whereby he preſſed her to open unto him, ſaying, " Open to me, my love, my dove, my undefiled;" which is ſet out, and amplified with a further moving argument of thoſe inconveniences Chriſt had ſuffered in his waiting for entertainment in her heart. " For my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." All which aggravates her offence, and his rare goodneſs and patience towards miſerable ſinners, ſo to wait from time to time, for admiſſion into our wretched ſouls, that he may rule and govern them by his holy ſpirit. Therefore we had great

great need to ſhun this ſleepy diſtemper of ſoul, which, for the preſent, ſo locks up the everlaſting gates of our ſoul, that the king of glory cannot enter in; and to ſtrive for this bleſſed heart-waking diſpoſition, which may help us at all times to ſee our dangers, and, by God's bleſſing, recover us out of them, as here the church doth at length; though firſt ſmarting and well beaten by the watchmen, in a world of perplexities, ere ſhe can recover the ſenſe of her former union and communion with Chriſt.

And ſurely, we find by experience, what a woeful thing it is for the ſoul, which hath once taſted how gracious the Lord is, to be long without a ſenſe of God's love: for, when it looks upon ſin, as the cauſe of this ſeparation, this is, for the time, as ſo many deaths unto it. Therefore the church's experience muſt be our warning-piece, to take heed how we grieve the ſpirit, and ſo fall into this ſpiritual ſleep: Wherein yet this is a good ſign, that we are not in a dead ſleep, when we can with her ſay,

"It is the voice of my beloved that knocks, ſaying, open unto me," &c.

In which words you have, 1. The church's acknowledgement of Chriſt's voice. 2. Of his carriage towards her.

1. Her acknowledgement is ſet down here. "It is the voice of my beloved." 2. His carriage, "He knocks," &c. wherein,

1. His patience in ſuffering things unworthy and utterly unbeſeeming for him. He doth not only knock, but he continues knocking, till his head was filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night. 2. His friendly appellation, "Open to me, my love, my dove, my undefiled." Lo here are ſweet actions, ſweet words, and all to melt the heart of the ſpouſe.

Firſt, the church's acknowledgement is to be conſidered, confeſſing, "It is the voice of my beloved." The firſt thing to be obſerved in this acknowledgment is, that the church, however ſleepy and drowſy ſhe was, yet notwithſtanding, her heart was ſo far awake, as to know the voice of her huſband.—The point is this,

That a chriſtian ſoul doth know and may diſcern the voice of Chriſt, yea, and that even in a lazy ſleepy eſtate, but much more when in a good and lively frame.

God's

God's believers are Christ's sheep: "Now my sheep" (saith Christ) "hear my voice." It is the ear-mark, as it were, of a christian, one of the characters of the new man, to taste words by the ear, as Job saith, he hath a spiritual taste, a discerning relish in the ear, because he hath the spirit of God, and therefore relisheth what is co-natural, and suitable to the spirit. Now the voice of Christ without in the ministry, and the spirit of Christ within in the heart, are co-natural and suitable to each other.

And surely so it is, that this is one way to discern a true christian from another, even by a taste in hearing: for those that have a spiritual relish, they can hear, with some delight, things that are most spiritual. As the heathen man said of a meadow, that some creatures come to eat one sort of herbs, others another, all that which is fit for them; men to walk therein for delight; all for ends suitable to their nature. So in coming to hear the word of God; some come to observe the elegance of words and phrases; some to catch advantage, perhaps, against the speaker, men of a devilish temper; and some to conform themselves to the custom of the place they live in; or to satisfy the clamour of a troubled conscience, that will have some divine duty performed, else it goes on with much vexation. But every true christian comes, and relisheth what is spiritual: and when outward things can convey, in similitudes, spiritual things aptly to the mind, he relisheth this, not as elegant, and pleasing his fancy, so much, as for conveying the voice of Christ unto his soul. So that a man may be much helped to know his state in grace, and what he is, by his ear: itching ears usually are such as are led with lust, as the apostle saith, and they must be clawed. They are sick, and nothing will down with them, they quarrel with every thing that is wholesome, as they did with manna; no sermons will please them, no bread is fine and white enough.—Whereas indeed, their own distemper only is in fault. As those that go in a ship upon the sea; it is not the tossing but the stomach, that causeth a sickness, the choler within, and not the waves without: so the disquiet of these men, that nothing will go down with them, is from their own distemper. If Christ himself were here preaching, they would be sure to cavil at something, as then men did when he preached in his own person; because they labour of lusts, which they resolve to feed and cherish.

And again, observe it against our adversaries: what say they? How shall we know that the word is the word of God? For this

this heretic ſaith thus, and thus interprets it. This is the common objection of the great rabbies, amongſt them, in their writings, how we can know the word to be God's, conſidering there are ſuch hereſies in the churches, and ſuch contrariety of opinions concerning the ſcriptures read in the churches.

Even thus to object and aſk, is an argument and teſtimony, that theſe men have not the ſpirit of Chriſt; for "his ſheep know his voice:" who, howſoever they cannot interpret all places of ſcripture; yet they can diſcern in the ſcripture what is ſuitable food for them; or in the unfolding of the ſcriptures, in preaching, they can diſcern agreeable food for them, having a faculty to reject that which is not fit for nouriſhment, to let it go. As there are in nature paſſages fit for concoction, and digeſtion, and for rejection: ſo there is in the ſoul, to work out of the word, even out of that which is hard, yet wholeſome, what is fit for the ſoul and ſpirit. If it be caſt down, it feeds upon the promiſes for direction, and conſolation; and what is not fit nouriſhment, that it rejects, that is, if it be of a contrary nature, heterogeneous. Therefore we anſwer them thus: that God's ſheep hear his voice, that his word in the church; when it is unfolded, his ſpirit goes together with it, breeding a reliſh of the word in the hearts of people, whereby they are able to taſte and reliſh it; and it hath a ſupernatural power and majeſty in it, which carries its own evidence with it. How ſhall we know light to be light? It carries evidence in itſelf that it is light. How know we that the fire is hot? becauſe it carries evidence in itſelf that it is ſo. So if you aſk, How we know the word of God to be the word of God? it carries in itſelf inbred arguments and characters, that the ſoul can ſay, none but this word can be the word of God, it hath ſuch a majeſty and power to caſt down and raiſe up, and to comfort, and to direct with ſuch power and majeſty, that it carries with it its own evidence, and it is argument enough for it. And thus we anſwer them, which they can anſwer no way, but by cavils. God's ſheep hear the voice of Chriſt. He ſpeaks, and the church underſtands him, "and a ſtranger's voice they will not hear." John x v.

And indeed, this is the only ſure way of underſtanding the word to be of God, from an inbred principle of the majeſty in the word, and a powerful work thereof on the ſoul itſelf; and an aſſent ſo grounded is that which makes a ſound chriſtian. If we ſhould aſk what is the reaſon there are ſo many, that apoſtatiſe, fall away, grow profane, and are ſo unfruitful under the goſpel;

pel? notwithſtanding they hear ſo much as they do? the anſwer is, their ſouls were never founded and bottomed upon this, that it is the word of God, and divine truth; ſo as to be able to ſay, I have felt it by experience, that it is the voice of Chriſt. Therefore they ſo ſoon apoſtatize, if Jeſuits, or ſeducers ſet upon them; they were never perſuaded from inbred arguments, that the voice of Chriſt is the word of God; others from ſtrictneſs, grow profane, becauſe they were never convinced by the power and majeſty of the truth in itſelf; and then in the end they deſpair, notwithſtanding all the promiſes; they were never convinced of the truth of them, they cannot ſay amen to all the promiſes: but the church can ſay confidently, upon ſound experience, "It is the voice of my beloved," &c.

Again, Whereas the church ſaith here, "It is the voice of my beloved," &c. and knows this voice of her beloved, we may note, That the church of God, and every chriſtian, takes notice of the means that God uſeth for their ſalvation.

A chriſtian is ſenſible of all the bleſſed helps he hath to ſalvation. To a dead heart, it is all one, whether they have means or no means, but a chriſtian ſoul takes notice of all the means. "It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh," it ſeeth Chriſt in all.

And mark what the church ſaith moreover, "It is the voice of my beloved," ſhe acknowledgeth Chriſt to be beloved of her, though ſhe were aſleep. So then here is a diſtinction between the ſleep of a chriſtian, and the dead ſleep of another natural man: the one when he ſleeps, his heart doth not only awake, but it is awake to diſcern the voice of Chriſt; it can reliſh in reading what is ſpiritual and good, what is ſavoury, and what not. And likewiſe take a chriſtian at the worſt when he is aſleep, he loves Chriſt, he will do nothing againſt him. "I can do nothing," ſaith Paul, "againſt the truth, but for the truth;" he will do nothing againſt the cauſe of religion; there is a new nature in him, that he cannot do otherwiſe; he cannot but love, he cannot ſin with a full purpoſe, nor ſpeak againſt a good cauſe, becauſe he hath a new nature that leads him another way; Chriſt is her beloved's ſtill, though ſhe ſleep.

Take a chriſtian at the loweſt, his heart yearns after Chriſt.

Acknowledging him to be his beloved, there is a conjugal chaſtity in the ſoul of a chriſtian, holding firm to the covenant and

and marriage between Chriſt and it; he keeps that inviolable; though he may be untoward, ſleepy, and drowſy, yet there is always a conjugal ſpouſe-like affection. "It is the voice of my beloved," &c.

Now, leaving the church's notice of the voice of Chriſt, we come to Chriſt's carriage towards her.

1. He knocketh: and then we have, 2. His patience in that carriage.

"My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night," &c. Here is patience and mercy to endure this indignity at the church's hand, to ſtand at her courteſy to come in; beſides, 3. The appellation, afterwards to be ſpoken of. The general obſervation from Chriſt's carriage, is this, That Chriſt ſtill deſires a further and further communion with his church.

Even as the true ſoul, that is touched with the ſpirit, deſires nearer and nearer communion with Chriſt; ſo he ſeeks nearer and nearer communion with his ſpouſe, by all ſanctified means. Chriſt hath never enough of the ſoul; he would have it more and more open to him: our hearts are for Chriſt, who hath the heaven of heavens, and the ſoul of a believing chriſtian for himſelf to dwell in; he contents not himſelf to be in heaven alone, but he will have our hearts. He knocks here, waits, ſpeaks friendly and lovingly, with ſuch ſweet words, "My love, my dove," &c. We had a bleſſed communion in the ſtate of innocence, and ſhall have a glorious communion in heaven, when the marriage ſhall be conſummated; but now the time of this life is but as the time of the contract, during which there are yet many mutual paſſages of love between him and his ſpouſe, a deſire of mutual communion of either ſide. Chriſt deſires farther entertainment in his church's heart and affection, that he might lodge and dwell there. And likewiſe, there is a like deſire in the church, when ſhe is in a right temper, ſo that if any ſtrangeneſs be between Chriſt and any man's ſoul, that hath taſted how good the Lord is, let him not blame Chriſt for it, for he delights not in ſtrangeneſs. He that knocks, and ſtands knocking, while his locks are bedewed with the drops of the night? Doth he delight in ſtrangeneſs, who makes all this love to a chriſtian's ſoul? Certainly, no.

Therefore look for the cauſe of his ſtrangeneſs at any time in thine own ſelf; as, whether we caſt ourſelves imprudently

into company, that are not fit to be conſulted withal, in whom the ſpirit is not, and who cannot do us any good, or they caſt themſelves to us. Evil company is a great damping, whereby a chriſtian loſeth his comfort much, eſpecially that intimate communion with God, whence we may fall into ſecurity.

Again, diſcontinuing of religious exerciſes, doth wonderfully cauſe Chriſt to withdraw himſelf. He makes no more love to our ſouls, when we neglect the means, and diſcontinue holy exerciſes, and religious company; when we ſtir not up the graces of God's ſpirit. Being this way negligent, it is no wonder that Chriſt makes no more love to our ſouls, when we prize and value not the communion that ſhould be between the ſoul and Chriſt, as we ſhould. "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" "Thy loving-kindneſs is better than life," ſaith the Pſalmiſt. When we prize not this, it is juſt with Chriſt to make himſelf ſtrange. Where love is not valued and eſteemed, it is eſtranged, and for a while it hides itſelf. So that theſe, with other courſes and failings, we may find to be the ground and reaſon of the ſtrangeneſs between Chriſt and the ſoul: for certainly the cauſe is not in him; for we ſee here, he uſeth all means to be entertained by a chriſtian ſoul—"he knocks."

You know what he ſays to the church of Laodicea, Rev. iii 20. "Behold, I ſtand at the door and knock." So here, "It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh;" therefore, in ſuch a caſe, ſearch your own hearts, where, if there be deadneſs and deſertion of ſpirit, lay the blame upon yourſelves; and enter into a ſearch of your own ways, and ſee what may be the cauſe.

Now, to come more particularly to Chriſt's carriage here, knocking at the heart of the ſleepy church. We ſee, that Chriſt takes not the advantage and forfeiture of the ſins of his church, to leave them altogether, but makes further and further love to them; though the church be ſleepy, Chriſt continueth knocking. The church of Laodicea was a lukewarm, proud, hypocritical church; yet, "Behold," ſaith Chriſt, "I ſtand at the door, and knock;" and it was ſuch a church as was vainglorious and conceited. "I am rich and want nothing, when ſhe was poor, blind and naked." And here he doth not only ſtand knocking, but he withal ſuffereth indignities, the dew to fall upon him, which we ſhall ſpeak more of hereafter. Chriſt therefore refuſeth not weak ſinners; he that commands that we ſhould receive him that is weak in the faith, and not caſt him off

off from our fellowſhip and company, will he reject him that is weak and ſleepy? No: what father will paſs by, or neglect his child, for ſome failings and weakneſſes? nature will move him to reſpect him as his child.

Now Chriſt is merciful, both by his office, and by his nature. Our nature he took upon him, that he might be a merciful redeemer. And then, as God alſo, he is love, God is love; that is, whatſoever God ſhews himſelf to his church, he doth it in love. If he be angry in correcting, it is out of love: if merciful, it is out of love: if he be powerful in defending his church, and revenging himſelf on our enemies, all is love: "God is love," ſaith John; that is, he ſhews himſelf only in ways, expreſſions and characters of love to his church: So Chriſt, as God, is all love to the church. And we ſee the ſcriptures alſo to ſet out God as love, both in his eſſence, and in his relation: 1. In relations of love to his church, he is a Father; "As a father pitieth his child, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him:" And 2. alſo in thoſe ſweet attributes of love, which are his eſſence, as we ſee in Exod. xxxiv. 6. When God deſcribes himſelf to Moſes, after his deſire to know him, in the former chapter, "Thou canſt not ſee me and live;" yet he would make him know him, as was fit for him to be known, "Jehovah, Jehovah, ſtrong, merciful, gracious, long-ſuffering," &c. Thus God will be known in theſe attributes of conſolation. So Chriſt, as God, is all love and mercy: Likewiſe Chriſt, as man, he was man for this end, to be all love and mercy. Take him in his office, as Jeſus, to be a Saviour, he carrieth ſalvation in his wings, as it is Mal. iv. 2. both by office, and by nature.

And here how excellently is the expreſſion of Chriſt's mercy, love, and patience ſet out? "He knocks, my beloved knocketh," &c. ſaying, He knocks for further entrance, as was ſhewn before; ſome he had already, but he would have further: As you know we have divers rooms and places in our houſes; there is the court, the hall, the parlour, and cloſet: The hall for common perſons, the parlour for thoſe of better faſhion, the cloſet for a man's ſelf, and thoſe that are intimate friends: ſo a chriſtian hath room in his heart for worldly thoughts; but his cloſet, his inmoſt affections, are kept for his inmoſt friend Chriſt, who is not content with the hall, but will come into the very cloſet; he knocks that we ſhould open, and let him

come into our hearts, into our more intimate affections and love. Nothing will content him but intimacy; for he deſerves it; as we ſhall ſee, he knocks for this end. But how doth he knock?

1. Every kind of way: It is taken from the faſhion of men in this kind, (God condeſcending to ſpeak to us in our own language) ſometimes you know, there is a knocking or calling for entrance by voice, when a voice may ſerve, and then there needs no further knocking.

Sometimes both by voice and knocking: if voice will not ſerve, knocking comes after. So it is here, Chriſt doth knock, and ſpeak, uſeth a voice of his word, and knocks by his works, and both together ſometimes; whether by works of mercy, or of judgement, he labours to enter the ſoul, to raiſe the ſleepy ſoul that way; he begins with mercy uſually. 1. By mercies: all the creatures and bleſſings of God carry in them, as it were, a voice of God to the ſoul, that it would entertain his love. There goes a voice of love with every bleſſing. And the love, the mercy, and the goodneſs of God in the creature, is better than the creature itſelf: As we ſay of gifts, "The love of the giver is better than the gift itſelf." So the love of God, in all his ſweet benefits, is better than the thing itſelf; and ſo, in that we have, there is a voice, as it were, entreating us to entertain God, and Chriſt in all his mercies; yea every creature and benefit ſpeaks, as it were, thus to us: "We ſerve thee, that thou mayeſt ſerve him, that made thee and us." There is a ſpeech, as it were, in every favour; which mercies, if they cannot prevail, then come corrections, which are the voice of God alſo: "Hear the rod, and him that ſmiteth."

2. But hath the rod a voice? Yes; for what doth corrections ſpeak, but amendment of the faults we are corrected for? ſo we muſt hear the rod; all corrections tend to this purpoſe; they are as knockings, that we ſhould open to God and Chriſt. And becauſe corrections of themſelves will not amend us, God to this kind of knocking, adds a voice; he teaches and corrects together. "Happy is that man that thou correcteſt, and teacheſt out of thy law," ſaith the Pſalmiſt. Correction without teaching is to little purpoſe; therefore God adds inſtruction to correction. He opens the conſcience, ſo that it tells us it is for this that you are corrected; you are to blame in this; this you have done, that you ſhould not have done: So that corrections are knockings; but then eſpecially when they have inſtruction

tion thus with them. They are meſſengers from God, both bleſſings and corrections; they will not go away, eſpecially corrections, till they have an anſwer, for they are ſent of God, who will add ſeven times more; and, if the firſt be not anſwered, then he ſends after them. He will be ſure to have an anſwer, either in our converſion or confuſion, when he once begins.

3. Many other ways he uſeth to knock at our hearts. The examples of thoſe we live among that are good; they call upon us—the patterns of their holy life. The examples of God's juſtice upon others, are ſpeeches to us; God knocks at our door then. He intends our correction, when he viſits another; when, if we amend by that, he needs not take us in hand.

4. But beſides all this, there is a more near knocking, that Chriſt uſeth to the church, his miniſterial knocking. When he was here in the days of his fleſh, he was a preacher and prophet himſelf; and now he is aſcended into heaven, he hath given gifts to men, and men to the church, whom he ſpeaks by, to the end of the world; they are Chriſt's mouth, as we ſaid of the penmen of holy Scripture; they were but the hand to write, Chriſt was the head to indite: So in preaching and unfolding the word, they are but Chriſt's mouth and his voice, as it is ſaid of John. Now he is in heaven, he ſpeaks by them: "He that heareth you, heareth me; he that deſpiſeth you, deſpiſeth me." Chriſt is either received or rejected in his miniſters; as it is ſaid of Noah's time, "The ſpirit of Chriſt preached in the days of Noah to the ſouls now in priſon," &c. Chriſt, as God, did preach before he was incarnate, by Noah, to the old world, which is now in priſon, in hell, becauſe they refuſed to hear Chriſt ſpeak to them by Noah: much more now, after the days of his fleſh, that he is in heaven, he ſpeaks and preaches to us, which if we regard not, we are like to be in priſon, as thoſe ſouls are now in priſon for neglecting the preaching of Noah, 1 Pet. iii. 19. So the miniſters are Chriſt's mouth, when they ſpeak, he ſpeaks by them, (whom they ſhould imitate in mildneſs). "We therefore, as ambaſſadors, beſeech and entreat you, as if Chriſt by us ſhould ſpeak to you; ſo we entreat you to be reconciled unto God." And you know what heart-breaking words the apoſtle uſeth in all his Epiſtles, eſpecially when he writes to chriſtians in a good ſtate, as to the Philippians, "If there be any bowels of mercy, if there be any conſolation in Chriſt," then regard what I ſay, "be of one mind." And,

among the Theſſalonians, he was a nurſe to them. So Chriſt ſpeaks by them, and puts his own affections into them; that as is he tender, and full of bowels himſelf, ſo he hath put the ſame bowels into thoſe that are his true miniſters.

He ſpeaks by them, and they uſe all kind of means, that Chriſt may be entertained into their hearts. They move all ſtones, as it were, ſometimes threatenings, ſometimes entreaties; ſometimes they come as the ſons of thunder, ſometimes with the ſtill voice of ſweet promiſes; and becauſe one man is not ſo fit as another for all varieties of conditions and ſpirits, therefore God gives varieties of gifts to his miniſters, that they may knock at the heart of every man by their ſeveral gifts. For ſome have more rouſing gifts, ſome more inſinuating gifts; ſome more legal, ſome more evangelical ſpirits—yet all for the church's good. John Baptiſt, by a more thundering way of preaching, to make way for Chriſt to come, threatened judgement. But Chriſt then, he comes with a "Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit; bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt for righteouſneſs," &c. All kind of means have been uſed in the miniſtry, from the beginning of the world.

5. And becauſe of itſelf, this miniſtry is a dead letter; he joins that with the word, which knocks at the heart, together with the word, not ſevered from it, but is the life of it: Oh the ſpirit is the life and ſoul of the word: and when the inward word, or voice of the ſpirit, and the outward word or miniſtry, go together, then Chriſt doth more effectually knock, and ſtir up the heart.

Now this ſpirit knocks with ſweet inſpirations, moves the heart, enlightens the underſtanding, quickens the dull affections, and ſtirs them up to duty; as it is, Iſa. xx. 21. "And thine ears ſhall hear a voice behind thee, ſaying, This is the way, walk in it." The ſpirit moves us ſweetly, agreeable to our own nature; it offers not violence to us: But ſo, as in Hoſea xi. 4. "I drew them by the cords of a man;" that is, by reaſons and motives befitting the nature of man, motives of love: So the ſpirit, together with the word, works upon us, as we are men, by rational motives, ſetting good before us, if we will let Chriſt in to govern and rule us; and by the danger on the contrary, ſo moving, and ſtirring up our affections—theſe be the cords of a man.

6. And

6. And beſides his ſpirit, God hath implanted in us a conſcience to call upon us, to be his vicar, a little god in us to do his office, to call upon us, to direct us, check, and condemn us, which in great mercy he hath placed in us.

Thus we may ſee what means Chriſt uſeth here; his voice, works, and word; works of mercy and of correction, his word, together with his ſpirit, and the conſcience, that he hath planted to be, as it were, a God in us, which, together with his ſpirit, may move us to duty. This Auſtin ſpeaks of, when he ſaith, "God ſpake in me oft, and I knew it not." He means it of conſcience, together with the ſpirit, ſtirring up motives to leave his ſinful courſes. God knocked in me, and I conſidered it not. I cried *modo*, and *modo*, *ſine modo*. I put off God; now I will, and now I will; but I had no moderation, I knew no limits. And whilſt Chriſt thus knocketh, all the three perſons may be ſaid to do it: for, as it is ſaid elſewhere, "that God was and is in Chriſt, reconciling the world," &c. For, whatſoever Chriſt did, he did it as anointed, and by office. And therefore God doth it in Chriſt, and by Chriſt; and ſo, in ſome ſort, God died in the human nature, when Chriſt died. So here the Father beſeecheth, when Chriſt beſeecheth; becauſe he beſeecheth that is ſent from him, and anointed of the Father. And God the Father ſtoops to us, when Chriſt ſtoops, becauſe he is ſent of the Father, and doth all by his Father's command and commiſſion. So beſides his own bowels, there is the Father and the Spirit with Chriſt, who doth all by his ſpirit, and from his Father, from whom he hath commiſſion. Therefore, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, knock at the heart. "Open to me, my love, my dove, my undefiled;" but Chriſt, eſpecially by his ſpirit, becauſe it is his office.

Object.—But ſome may object, Chriſt can open to himſelf, why doth he not take the key, and open, and make way for himſelf? Who will knock, when he hath the key himſelf? and who will knock, when there is none within to open? Chriſt can open to himſelf, and we have no free-will nor power to open.

Bellarmine makes this objection, and ſpeaks very rudely, That he is an unwiſe man to knock, when there is no man within to open; and that if Chriſt knock, and we cannot open, it is a deluſion to exhort to open; and that therefore there muſt needs be free-will in us to open.

The anſwer is: Firſt, Chriſt ſpeaks to the ſpouſe here; and ſo many ſuch exhortations are given to them that have the ſpirit of God already, who could, by the help thereof, open: for good and gracious men are moved firſt by the ſpirit, and then they move. They are acted firſt by the ſpirit, and then they do act by it, not of themſelves: as the inferior orbs move not, but as they are moved by the ſuperior The queſtion is not of them in the ſtate of grace, but at their firſt converſion; when eſpecially we ſay that Chriſt ſpeaks to them whom he means to convert, he knocks at their hearts, and opens together with his ſpeech. Then there goes a power that they ſhall open; for his words are operative words; as it was in the creation, "Let there be light," it was an operative word, "and there was light." Let there be ſuch a creature, it was an operative working word, and there was ſuch a creature preſently. So he opens together with that word. With that invitation and command, there goes an almighty power to enable the ſoul to open. Were it not a wiſe reaſon to ſay, when Chriſt called to Lazarus to come forth, that we ſhould reaſon he had life to yield to Chriſt, when he bade him come forth? no, he was rotten in his grave almoſt; but with Chriſt's ſpeaking to Lazarus, there went an almighty power that gave life to him; by which life he heard what Chriſt ſaid, "Ariſe, Lazarus" ſo Chriſt, by his ſpirit, cloaths his word in the miniſtry, when he ſpeaks to people with a mighty power: as the miniſter ſpeaks to the ear, Chriſt ſpeaks, opens, and unlocks the heart, at the ſame time, and gives it power to open, not from itſelf, but from Chriſt. Paul ſpeaks to Lydia's ear, Chriſt to her heart, and opened it, as the text ſays, whereby ſhe believed. So Chriſt opens the heart.

Queſt.—But why doth he thus work?

Anſ.—Becauſe he will preſerve nature, and the principles thereof, and ſo he deals with us, working accordingly; the manner of working of the reaſonable creature, is to work freely by a ſweet inclination, not by violence. Therefore when he works the work of converſion, he doth it in a ſweet manner, though it be mighty for the efficacy of it, he admoniſheth us with entreaty and perſuaſion, as if we did it ourſelves. But though the manner be thus ſweet, yet with this manner there goeth an almighty power. Therefore, he doth it ſtrongly as coming from himſelf, and ſweetly, as the ſpeaking is to us, preſerving our nature, ſo the action is from him which hath an almighty power

power with it. As holy Bernard ſaith, "Thou dealeſt ſweetly with my ſoul in regard of myſelf," (that is, thou workeſt upon me as a man, with the words of love) "but ſtrongly in regard of thyſelf." For excepting he add ſtrength with ſweetneſs, the work will not follow, but when there are both, an almighty work is wrought in the ſoul of a chriſtian, and ſo wrought, as the manner of man's working is preſerved in a ſweet and free manner, whilſt he is changed from contrary to contrary: and it is alſo with the greateſt reaſon that can be, in that now he ſees more reaſon to be good, than in the days of darkneſs he did to be naught. God works ſo ſweetly. God ſpeaks to us after the manner of men, but he works in us as the great God; he ſpeaks to us as a man in our own language, ſweetly; but he works in us almightily, after a powerful manner, as God: ſo we muſt underſtand ſuch phraſes as theſe, "I knock, open to me my love, my dove," &c. We may take further notice,

That the heart of a chriſtian is the houſe and temple of Chriſt.

He hath but two houſes to dwell in, the heavens, and the heart of a humble broken-hearted ſinner.

Queſt.—How can Chriſt come into the ſoul?

Anſ.—He comes into the heart by his ſpirit; it is a ſpecial entertainment that he looks for; open thine ears, that thou mayeſt hear my word; thy love, that thou mayeſt love me more; thy joy, that thou mayeſt delight in me more; open thy whole ſoul, that I may dwell in it. A chriſtian ſhould be God's houſe, and a true chriſtian is the true temple of God. He left the other two temples therefore, but his own body and his church he never leaves; for a houſe is for a man to ſolace himſelf in, and reſt in, and lay up whatſoever is precious to him; ſo with Chriſt; a man will repair his houſe, ſo Chriſt will repair our ſouls, and make them better, and make them more holy and ſpiritual, and every way fit for ſuch a gueſt as he is.

Queſt.—How ſhall we know whether Chriſt dwells in our hearts or not?

Anſ.—We may know by the ſervants what maſter dwells in a houſe: If Chriſt be in the ſoul, there comes out of the houſe good ſpeeches, and we watch the ſenſes, ſo as there comes nothing in to defile the ſoul and diſturb Chriſt, and nothing goes out to offend God. When we hear men full of gracious ſweet ſpeeches

ſpeeches, it is a ſign Chriſt dwells there: If we hear the contrary, it ſhews Chriſt dwells not there, for Chriſt would move the whole man to do that which might edify and comfort.

Again, where Chriſt comes, aſſiſtance alſo comes there. When Chriſt was born, all Jeruſalem was in an uproar; ſo when Chriſt is born in the ſoul, there is an uproar, corruption arms itſelf againſt grace, there is a combat betwixt fleſh and ſpirit, but Chriſt ſubdues the fleſh by little and little. God's image is ſtamped upon the ſoul where Chriſt is, and if we have opened unto the Lord of glory, he will make us glorious.

Chriſt hath never enough of us, nor have we ever enough of him, till we be in heaven, and therefore we pray, "Thy kingdom come," and till Chriſt comes in his kingdom, he deſires his kingdom ſhould come to us, "Open" (ſaith he) "Stupenda dignatio," &c. (as he cries out) it is a ſtupendous condeſcending, when he that hath heaven to hold him, angels to attend him, thoſe glorious creatures; he that hath the command of every creature, that do yield preſently homage, when he commands; the frogs, and lice, and all the hoſt of heaven are ready to do his will; for him to condeſcend and to entreat us to be good to our ſouls, and to beſeech us to be reconciled to him, as if he had offended us, who have done the wrong and not he, or as if that we had power and riches to do him good; here greatneſs beſeecheth meanneſs, riches poverty, all-ſufficiency want, and life itſelf comes to dead drowſy ſouls. What a wondrous condeſcending is this! Yet notwithſtanding Chriſt vouchſafes to make the heart of a ſinful ſleepy man to be his houſe, his temple. He knocks, and knocks here, ſaying, "Open to me," &c.

Uſe—This is uſeful many ways. As firſt, cheriſh all the good thoughts we can of Chriſt; the time will come that the devil will ſet upon us with ſharp temptations, fiery darts, temptations to deſpair, and preſent Chriſt amiſs, as if Chriſt were not willing to receive us, when as you ſee he knocks at our hearts to open to him, uſeth mercies and judgements, the miniſtry of his ſpirit, and conſcience, and all. Will not he then entertain us when we come to him, that ſeeks this entertainment at our hands? Certainly he will; therefore let us labour to cheriſh good things of Chriſt. This is the finiſher and the beginning of the converſion of a poor ſinful ſoul, even to conſider the infinite love and condeſcending of Chriſt Jeſus for the good of

of our ſouls: We need not wonder at his willingneſs to receive us, when we firſt know that God became man, happineſs became miſery, and life itſelf came to die, and to be a curſe for us. He hath done the greater, and will he not do the leſs? Therefore think not ſtrange that he uſeth all theſe means, conſidering how low he deſcended into the womb of the virgin for us, Eph. iv. 9.

Now, ſuch conſiderations as theſe being mixed with the ſpirit, and ſet on by him, are effectual for the converſion of poor ſouls. Is there ſuch love in God to become man, and to be a ſuitor to woo me for my love? Surely, thinks the ſoul, then he deſires my ſalvation and converſion. And to what kind of perſons doth he come? None can object unworthineſs; I am poor; he comes to the poor: I am laden and wretched, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden:" I have nothing, "Come and buy honey, milk and wine," though you have nothing. He takes away all objections. But I am ſtung with the ſenſe of my ſins, "Bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt," &c. But I am empty of all, "Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit." You can object nothing but it is taken away by the Holy Ghoſt, wiſely preventing all the objections of a ſinful ſoul. This is the beginning of converſion, theſe very thoughts; and when we are converted, theſe thoughts entertained with admiration of Chriſt's condeſcending, are effectual to give Chriſt further entrance into the ſoul, whereby a more happy communion is wrought ſtill more and more beween Chriſt and the ſoul of a chriſtian.

Uſe—2. Oh, but take heed that theſe make not us ſecure: for if we give not entrance to Chriſt, all this will be a further aggravation of our damnation. How will this juſtify the ſentence upon us hereafter, when Chriſt ſhall ſet us on the left hand, and ſay, "Depart from me," for I invited you to come to me; I knocked at the door of your hearts, and you would give me no entrance; Depart from us, ſaid you; therefore now, Depart you from me. What do profane perſons in the Church, but bid Chriſt depart from them, eſpecially in the motions of his ſpirit? they entertain him in the outward room, the brain; they know a little of Chriſt, but in the heart, the ſecret room, he muſt not come there to rule. Is it not equal that he ſhould bid us, "Depart, ye curſed, I know you not?" you would not give entrance to me, I will not now to you; as to the fooliſh virgins he ſpeaks; and Prov. i. 28. Wiſdom knocks and hath no entrance,

therefore

therefore in times of danger they call upon her, but ſhe rejoiceth at their deſtruction; Where God magnifies his mercy in this kind, in ſweet allurements, and inviting by judgements, mercies, miniſtry, and the ſpirit, he will magnify his judgement after. Thoſe that have neglected heaven, with the prerogatives and advantages of this kind, ſhall be caſt into hell; "Woe to thee Chorazin," &c. as you know in the goſpel. This is one thing that may humble us of this place and nation, that Chriſt hath no further entrance nor better entertainment, after ſo long knocking; for the entertaining of his word is the welcoming of himſelf, as it is, Coloſſ. iii. 16. "Let the word of God dwell plentifully in your hearts by faith, Epheſ. iii. 17. Compare thoſe places, let the word dwell plenteouſly in you by wiſdom, and let Chriſt dwell in your hearts by faith; for then doth Chriſt dwell in the heart, when the truth dwells in us; therefore what entertainment we give to his truth, we give to himſelf. Now what means of knocking hath he not uſed among us a long time? for works of all ſorts; he hath drawn us by the cords of a man, by all kinds of favours. For mercies; how many deliverances have we had, (no nation the like, we are a miracle of the chriſtian world) from foreign invaſion and domeſtic conſpiracies at home? How many mercies do we enjoy? abundance together with long peace and plenty. Beſides, if this would not do, God hath added corrections with all theſe, in every element, in every manner, infection in the air, judgements in inundations, we have had rumours of wars, &c. threatenings, ſhakings of the rod only, but ſuch as might have awaked us; and then he hath knocked at our hearts by the example of other nations; by what he hath done to them, he hath ſhewn us what he might juſtly have done to us; we are no better than they.

As for his miniſterial knocking, above threeſcore years we have lived under the miniſtry of the goſpel, this land hath been Goſhen, a land of light, when many other places are in darkneſs, eſpecially we that live in this Goſhen, this place, and ſuch like, where the light ſhines in a more abundant meaſure. Miniſters have been ſent, and variety of gifts; there hath been piping and mourning, (as Chriſt complains in his time) that they were like froward children, that neither ſweet piping nor doleful mourning would move to be tractable to their fellows, they had John who came mourning, and Chriſt comforting with bleſſing in his mouth; all kind of means have been uſed.

And for the motions of his ſpirit, who are there at this time who

who thus live in the church under the miniſtry, who cannot ſay that God thereby hath ſmote their hearts, thoſe hard rocks, again and again, and awaked their conſciences, partly with corrections public and perſonal, and partly with benefits; yet notwithſtanding, what little way is given to Chriſt? many are indifferent and lukewarm either way, but rather incline to the worſt.

Let us then conſider of it; the greater means, the greater judgements afterwards, if we be not wooed by them. Therefore let us labour to hold Chriſt, to entertain him, let him have the beſt room in our ſouls, to dwell in our hearts, let us give up the keys to him, and deſire him to rule our underſtandings, to know nothing but him, and what may ſtand with his truth, not to yield to any error or corruption; let us deſire that he would rule in our wills and affections, ſway all, give all to him, for that is his meaning when he ſays "Open to me," ſo that I may rule as in mine own houſe, as the huſband rules in his family, as a king in his kingdom; he will have all yielded up to him: and he comes to beat down all whatſoever is exalted againſt him, and that is the reaſon men are ſo loth to open unto him; they know if they open to the ſpirit of God, he will turn them out of their fool's paradiſe, and make them reſolve upon other courſes of life, which becauſe they will not turn unto, they repel the ſweet motions of the ſpirit of Chriſt, and pull away his graces, building bulwarks againſt Chriſt, as luſts, ſtrange imaginations and reſolutions. Let the miniſters ſay what they will, the ſpirit move as he will, thus they live, and thus they will live. Let us take notice therefore of all the means that God uſeth to the ſtate, and to us in particular, and every one labour to amend one. Every ſoul is the temple, the houſe Chriſt ſhould dwell in, let every ſoul therefore among us conſider what means Chriſt uſeth to come into his ſoul, to dwell with him, and to rule there.

And what ſhall we loſe by it? Do we entertain Chriſt to our loſs? Doth he come empty? No, he comes with all grace, his goodneſs is a communicative diffuſive goodneſs; he comes to ſpread his treaſures, to enrich the heart with all grace and ſtrength to bear all afflictions, to encounter all dangers, to bring peace of conſcience, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt; he comes indeed to make our hearts (as it were) a heaven. Do but conſider this, he comes not for his own ends, but to empty his goodneſs into our hearts, as a breaſt that deſires to empty itſelf when it is full. So this fountain hath the fulneſs of a fountain, which ſtrives

ſtrives to empty his goodneſs into our ſouls; he comes out of love to us. Let theſe conſiderations melt our hearts for our unkindneſs, that we ſuffer him to ſtand ſo long at the door knocking, as it is ſaid here.

If we find not our ſuits anſwered ſo ſoon as we would, remember we have made him alſo wait for us; perhaps to humble us, and after that to encourage us, he will make us wait, for we have made him wait. Let us not give over; for certainly he that deſires us to open, that he may pour out his graces upon us—he will not reject us when we come to him. If he anſwers us not at firſt, yet he will at laſt. Let us go on and wait, ſeeing there is no one duty preſſed more in ſcripture than this. And we ſee it is equity: he waits for us; it is good we ſhould wait for him: if we have not comfort preſently when we deſire it, let us attend upon Chriſt, as he hath attended upon us, for when he comes, he comes with advantage; ſo that when we wait, we loſe nothing thereby, but are gainers by it, increaſing our patience. The longer we wait, he comes with the more abundant grace and comfort in the end, and ſhews himſelf rich and bountiful to them that wait upon him.

SERMON VI.

CANTICLES v. 2.

"*It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, ſaying, Open unto me, "my ſiſter, my love, my dove, my undefiled,*" &c.

IN the firſt part of this verſe, hath been handled the church's own condition which ſhe was in, after ſome bleſſed feelings that ſhe had of the love of Chriſt.

Now, in the next words, the church ſets down an acknowledgement of the carriage of Chriſt to her, in this her ſleepy condition. "It is the voice of my beloved that knocks," ſaying, "Open to me, my ſiſter, my love, my dove," &c. She acknowledgeth Chriſt's voice in her ſleepy eſtate, and ſets down his

his carriage thus: how he knocks, and then alſo ſpeaks, Open to me; and then ſets down what he ſuffered for her, "My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." And that nothing might be wanting, that might move her heart to reſpect this his carriage towards her, he uſeth ſweet titles, a loving appellation, "Open to me, my ſiſter, my love, my dove, my undefiled," as ſo many cords of love to draw her: ſo here wants neither loving carriage, ſweet words, nor patience. —It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh."

The church, as ſhe takes notice of the voice of Chriſt, ſo ſhe doth alſo of the means he uſeth, and ſeeth his love in them all. "It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh," ſaying, "Open to me," &c. Here is alſo another diſtinguiſhing note of a ſound chriſtian from an unſound: a ſanctified ſpirit ſees Chriſt in the means; this is, ſays the heart, the word of Chriſt, and this is the mercy of Chriſt, to take ſuch pains with my ſoul; to ſend his miniſters, to provide his ordinances, to give gifts to men, and men to the church. "It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh."

But we muſt eſpecially underſtand it of the miniſterial voice, whereby Chriſt doth chiefly make way for himſelf into the heart, and that by all kind of ways diſpenſed therein: as gifts of all ſorts, ſome rougher, and ſome milder, all kinds of methods and ways in the miniſtry, to make way for himſelf. Firſt of all, by the threatenings of the law, and by terrors, as John was ſent before Chriſt, and as the ſtorm went before the ſtill and calm voice, wherein God came to Elijah; ſo he uſeth all kind of courſes in the miniſtry; and miniſters, by the direction of the ſpirit, turn themſelves, as it were, into all ſhapes and faſhions, both of ſpeech and ſpirit, to win people to God; inſomuch that God appeals to them, "What could I have done more for my church, that I have not done?"

Uſe.—Therefore, let us take notice of this voice of Chriſt in the word, and not think as good Samuel thought, that Eli ſpake, when God ſpake: let us think that God ſpeaks to us in the miniſtry, that Chriſt comes to woe us, and win us thereby.

And we miniſters are the friends of the bridegroom, who are to hear what Chriſt ſaith, and would have ſaid to the church; and we muſt pray to him, that he would teach us what to teach others.

others. We are to procure the contract, and to perfect it till the marriage be in heaven—that is our work.

And you that are hearers, if you do not regard Christ's sweet voice in the ministry, which God hath appointed for the government of the world, know, that there is a voice that you cannot shake off, that peremptory voice, at the day of judgement, when he will say, "Go ye cursed, into hell-fire," &c. And that God who delights to be styled "a God hearing prayer," will not hear thee; but saith, "Such a one as turns his ear away from hearing the law, his prayer is abominable." It is a doleful thing, that he that made us, and allureth us in the ministry, that follows us with all evidences of his love, and adds, together with his ministry, many sweet motions of his spirit, that he should delight in the destruction of his creatures, and not endure the sight of them, "Depart from me, ye cursed into hell-fire," &c. There are scarce any in the church, but Christ hath allured at one time or other to come in; and in many he opens their understandings in a great measure, and knocks upon their hearts, that they, as it were, half open unto Christ. Like Agrippa, who said, "Thou almost persuadest me to be a christian. So Herod did many things, and he heard gladly. They are half open, seem to open, but are not effectually converted; but at last they see, that further yielding will not stand with that which they resolve not to part with; their lusts, their present condition, that they make their god, and their heaven, whereupon they shut the door again; when they have opened it a little to the motions of God's spirit, they dare give no further way, because they cannot learn the first lesson in Christ's school, to deny themselves, and take up their cross.

This is an undoubted conclusion, our blessed Saviour giveth such means and motions of his spirit, to the vilest persons in the church, that their own hearts tell them, that they have more means, and sweeter motions than they yield to; and that the sentence of condemnation is not pronounced upon them for merely not knowing of Christ, but upon some grounds of rebellion, in that they go not so far as they are provoked, and put on by the spirit of God; they resist the holy spirit. There can be no resistance where there is not a going beyond the desire and will of him whom he resisteth. A man doth not resist, when he gives way as far as he is moved. There is no wicked man

man in the church, that gives ſo much way as he is moved and ſtirred to by the ſpirit and word of God.

Away then with theſe impudent ungracious objections about God's decree for matter of election; let us make it ſure: and, for any ill thoughts that may riſe in our hearts, about that other of reprobation, let this damp them all, that in the church of God, he offers unto the vileſt wretch ſo much means with the motions of his ſpirit, that if he reſiſt them, he proves inexcuſable; his own rebellion, therefore, being the cauſe of his rejection. Let men ceaſe from cavilling, God hath put that in their own breaſt, in the heart of every carnal man, which will ſpeak for God againſt him, and ſtop his mouth, that he ſhall be ſilent and ſpeechleſs at the day of judgement.

Thus we ſee that Chriſt doth condeſcend ſo low as to account it almoſt a part of his happineſs to have our ſouls for a temple to dwell in, to rule there. Therefore he makes all this earneſt ſuit, with ſtrong expreſſions what he ſuffereth.

And ſince Chriſt bears this great and large affection to his poor church, it may encourage us to pray heartily for the ſame, and to lay before God the ſtate thereof. Why, Lord! it is that part of the world which is thy ſiſter, thy love, thy dove, thy undefiled, in communion with whom thou liveſt, above all the world beſides. It is a ſtrong argument to prevail with God; therefore let us commend the ſtate of the church at this time, or at any time, with this confidence, "Lord, it is the church that thou loveſt." They thought they prevailed much with Chriſt, when they laboured to bring him to Lazarus, ſaying, "Lord, he whom thou loveſt is ſick." So ſay we, The church whom thou loveſt, that is thy only love, in whom thy love is concentrated, as it were, and gathered to a head, as though thou hadſt no other love in the world, but thy church, this thy love is in this ſtate and condition. It is good to think of prevailing arguments, not to move God ſo much as our own hearts, to ſtrengthen our faith to prevail with God, which is much fortified with the conſideration of Chriſt's wondrous loving expreſſions to his poor church. Then come to Chriſt, offer thyſelf, and he will meet thee. Are not two loving wellwiſhers well met? When thou offereſt thyſelf to him, and he ſeeks thy love; will he reject thee, when thou comeſt unto him that ſeeks thy love, and ſeeketh it in this paſſionate, affectionate manner, as he doth? Therefore, be of good comfort, he is more willing to entertain us, than we are to come to him.

And for thoſe who have relapſed any kind of way, let them not be diſcouraged to return again to Chriſt. The church here was in a drowſy ſleepy ſtate, and uſed him unkindly yet he is ſo patient, that he waits her leiſure as it were, and ſaith, "Open to me, my ſiſter, my love," &c. Thomas was ſo untoward, that he would not believe, "Unleſs he did ſee the print of the nails," &c in Chriſt's body. Yet Chriſt was ſo gracious, as to condeſcend to poor Thomas; ſo to Peter, after he was fallen, and to the church after backſliding.

Open to me, my ſiſter, &c.

Hence obſerve further, That Chriſt hath never enough of his church till he hath it in heaven, where are indeed the kiſſes of the ſpouſe, and of Chriſt: in the meanwhile, Open, open ſtill. Chriſt had the heart of the ſpouſe in ſome meaſure already, but yet there were ſome corners of the heart that were not ſo filled with Chriſt as they ſhould be, he was not ſo much in her underſtanding, will, joy, delight, and love, as he would be; therefore, open thy underſtanding more and more, to embrace me, and divine truths that are offered thee; open thy love, to ſolace me more and more: for God in Chriſt has condeſcended to the terms of friendſhip, nay, to intimate terms of friendſhip in marriage with us, and therefore the church in her right temper, hath never enough of Chriſt, but deſires further union, and communion ſtill; it being the deſcription of the people of God, that they love the appearance of Chriſt, as they loved his firſt appearance, and waited for the conſolation of Iſrael ſo they love his ſecond appearance, and are never quiet, till he comes again in the fleſh, to conſummate the marriage begun here: ſo Chriſt alſo, he is as deſirous of them, yea they are his deſires, that breed their deſires, "open to me, my ſiſter, my love, my dove," &c. Again his love and pity moves him to deſire further to come into us: Chriſt knows what is in our hearts; if he be not there, there is that which ſhould not be there. What is in the heart where Chriſt is not? many worldly projects, but nothing worth. What is in our joy, if Chriſt be not there? Worldly joy, which cleaves to things worſe than itſelf. If a man were anatomized, and ſeen in to, he would he aſhamed of himſelf, if he did ſee himſelf; Chriſt therefore out of pity to our ſouls, would not have the devil there; Chriſt knows it is good for our ſouls to give way to him, therefore he uſeth all ſweet allurements, "Open to me, my ſiſter, my love," &c. Chriſt hath never his fill, till he cloſe with

with the ſoul perfectly, ſo that nothing be in the ſoul above him, nothing equal to him, therefore, Open, open ſtill.

Again, he ſets down, to move the church the more to open to him, the inconveniences that he endured. "My head is filled with dew," &c. wherein he ſhews what he ſuffered, which ſufferings are of two ſorts: in himſelf, and in his miniſters. In himſelf, and in his own bleſſed perſon, what did he endure? what patience had he, in enduring the refractory ſpirits of men, when he was here? how many indignities did he ſuffer in his diſciples after their converſion? towards his latter end, his head was not only filled with the drops, but his body filled with drops of blood. Drops of blood came from him, becauſe of the anguiſh of his ſpirit, and the ſenſe of God's wrath for our ſins. Upon the croſs, what did he endure there? that ſenſe of God's anger there, was only for our ſins. "My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?" What ſhould we ſpeak of his going up and down doing good, preaching in his own perſon, ſetting whole nights apart for prayer? and then for what he ſuffers in his miniſters; there he knocks, and ſaith, Open, in them. And how was he uſed in the apoſtles that were after him, and in the miniſters of the church ever ſince? What have they endured? for he put a ſpirit of patience upon them. And what indignities endured they in the primitive church, that were the publiſhers of the goſpel? Thoſe ſweet publiſhers thereof, drawing men to open to Chriſt, were killed for preaching. So cruel is the heart, that it offereth violence to them that love them moſt, that love their ſouls. And what greater love, than the love of the ſoul? yet this is the fanatical temper and diſpoſition of men's hearts; they hate thoſe men moſt, that deal this way moſt truly and lovingly with them. It is not that the goſpel is ſuch a hard meſſage; it is the word of reconciliation, and the word of life; but the heart hates it, becauſe it would draw men from their preſent condition; and therefore, "condemnation is come into the world, in that men hate the light, becauſe their works are evil." Is there any thing truly and cordially hated but grace? and are any perſons heartily and cordially hated in the world ſo much as the promulgators and publiſhers of grace, and the poſſeſſors of it, becauſe it upbraids moſt of all, and meddles with the corruptions of men, that are dearer to them than their own ſouls?

Now what patience is there in Chriſt, to ſuffer himſelf in his meſſengers, and his children, to be thus uſed? nor is it ſtrange to

ſay that Chriſt ſtands thus in his miniſters; for, 1 Pet. iii. 19. it is ſaid "That Chriſt by his ſpirit preached in the days of Noah to the ſouls now in priſon." Chriſt preached in Noah's time before he was incarnate, much more doth he preach now; and as he was patient then to endure the old world, unto whom Noah preached a hundred and twenty years: ſo he is patient now in his miniſters, to preach ſtill by the ſpirit, even to us ſtill, and yet the entertainment in many places is, as Paul complains, "Though the more I love you, yet the leſs I am beloved of you."

Uſe 1.—Let theſe things move us to be patient towards God and Chriſt, if we be corrected in any kind, conſidering that Chriſt is ſo patient towards us; and to wait upon him with patience. How long hath he waited for our converſion? how long doth he ſtill wait for the thorough giving up of our ſouls to him? ſhall we think much then to wait a little while for him?

Uſe 2.—And let this ſpirit of Chriſt ſtrengthen us likewiſe in our dealing with others, ſo as to bear with evil men; and, as it is 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26. "To wait, if God will at any time give them repentance." Neither may we be ſo ſhort ſpirited, that if we have not an anſwer preſently, to give over. We ſhould imitate Chriſt here, never give over as long as God continues life, with any advantage and opportunity to do good to the ſoul: wait, if God at any time will give them grace. "Open to me, my ſiſter, my love," &c.

Let this again work upon us, that our Saviour Chriſt here would thus ſet forth his love, and his patience in his love, in bearing with us thus, under the reſemblance of a ſilly wooer that comes afar off, and ſtands at the door, and knocks; that Chriſt ſhould ſtoop thus in ſeeking the good of our ſouls. Let this win, and quicken our hearts with all readineſs and thankfulneſs to receive him when he comes to work in our ſouls, conſidering that Chriſt hath ſuch a care of us by himſelf, his miniſtry, and the motions of his ſpirit, who joins with his miniſtry; let us not therefore be careleſs of our own ſouls, but let it move our hearts to melt to him. The motives may be ſeen more in the particular appellations, "Open to me, my ſiſter, my love," &c.

My Siſter.

This was ſpoken of before in the former verſe. The church of

of God is Chriſt's ſiſter and ſpouſe, we are knit to him both by conſanguinity, and by affinity. The neareſt affinity is marriage, and the neareſt conſanguinity is ſiſter. So that there are all bonds to knit us to Chriſt; whatſoever is ſtrong in any bond, he knits us to him by it. Is there any love in an huſband, a brother, a mother, a friend, in a head to the members? in any thing in the world? is there any love ſcattered in any relation? gather it all into one, and all that love, and a thouſand times more than that, is in Chriſt in a more eminent manner; therefore he ſtiles himſelf in all theſe ſweet relations, to ſhew that he hath the love of all. Will a ſiſter ſhut out a brother, when the brother comes to viſit her, and do her all good? is this unkindneſs, even in nature, to look ſtrangely upon a man that is near a-kin, that comes and ſaith, Open to me, my ſiſter? If the ſiſter ſhould ſhut out the brother, were it not moſt unnatural? And is it not monſtrous in grace, when our brother comes for our good, and in pity to our ſouls, to let him ſtand without doors? Remember that Chriſt hath the ſame affections, to account us brothers and ſiſters now in heaven, as he had when he was upon the earth: for after his reſurrection, ſaith he to his diſciples, "I go to my God, and to your God; to my Father, and to your Father; he calls himſelf our brother, having one common Father in heaven, and one ſpirit, and one inheritance, &c. This is a ſweet relation, Chriſt being our brother, his heart cannot but melt towards us in any affliction. Joſeph diſſembled a while out of politic wiſdom, but becauſe he had a brother's heart to Benjamin, therefore at laſt he could not hold, but melted into tears, though he made his countenance, as though he had not regarded. So our Joſeph, now in heaven, may ſeem to withdraw all tokens and ſigns of brotherly love from us, and not to own us; but it is only in ſhew, he is our brother ſtill; his heart firſt or laſt, will melt towards his brethren, to their wonderful comfort, "My ſiſter," &c.

My Love.

That word we had not yet. It is worthy alſo a little conſidering; for, all theſe four words, are, as it were, the attractive cords to draw the ſpouſe, not only by ſhewing what he had ſuffered, but by ſweet titles, My love, my dove.

What, had Chriſt no love but his ſpouſe? Did his love go out of his own heart to her, as it were? It is ſtrange, yet true; Chriſt's love is ſo great to his church and his children,

and ſo continual to it, that his church and people, and every chriſtian ſoul, is the ſeat of his love; that love in his own breaſt being in them, they are his love, becauſe he himſelf is there, and one with them.

He loves all his creatures, they have all ſome beams of his goodneſs, which he muſt needs love, therefore he loves them as creatures; and, as they are more or leſs capable of a higher degree of goodneſs; but for his church and children, they are his love indeed.

Queſt.—But what is the ground of ſuch love?

Anſ. 1.—He loves them, as he beholds them in his Father's choice, as they are elected of God, and given to himſelf in election; "Thine they are, thou gaveſt them me." Chriſt looking on us, in God's election and choice, loves us.

2. Again, he loves us, becauſe he ſees his own graces in us; he loves what is his in us. Before we be actually his, he loves us with a love of good will, to wiſh all good to us; but when we have any thing of his ſpirit, that our natures are altered and changed, he loves us with a love of the moſt intimate friendſhip; with the love of a head, huſband, friend, and all we can imagine; he loves his own image. Paul ſaith, that "the wife is the glory of her huſband;" becauſe whatſoever is in a good huſband, the wife expreſſeth it by reflexion: ſo the church is the glory of Chriſt; ſhe reflects his excellencies, though in a weak meaſure; they ſhew forth his virtues and praiſes, as Peter ſpeaks. Thus he ſees his own image in her, and the Holy Ghoſt in his church; he loves her, and theſe in her; ſo that whether we regard the Father or himſelf, or his ſpirit, the church is his love.

3. If we conſider alſo what he hath done and ſuffered for her, we may well ſay the church is his love Beſides the former favours, (not to ſpeak of election), he choſe us before we were. In time, he did chooſe us by actual election, by which he called us. We had an exiſtence, but we reſiſted; he called us when we reſiſted; and then alſo he juſtified us, and cloathed us with his own righteouſneſs; and after feeds us with his own body. As the ſoul is the moſt excellent thing in the world, ſo he hath provided for it the moſt excellent ornaments. It hath food and ornaments proportionable. What love is this, that he ſhould feed our ſouls with his own body, and clothe us with

with his own righteouſneſs? "He loved me," ſaith Paul: what was the effect of his love? "He gave himſelf for me." He gave himſelf, both that we might have a righteouſneſs to clothe us with in the ſight of God; and he gave himſelf, that he might be the bread of life. "My fleſh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." The guilty, the ſelf-accuſing ſoul, feeds upon Chriſt dying for its ſins. Again, Rev. i. 6. you have his love ſet forth; He loved us—and how doth he witneſs it? "He hath waſhed us with his own blood, and hath made us kings and prieſts, &c. The like you have, Epheſ. v. "He loved us, and gave himſelf a ſacrifice to God for us." When this world is at an end, we ſhall ſee what his love is; he is not ſatisfied till we be all in one place. What doth he pray for to his Father, John xvii. 24 "Father, I will that thoſe whom thou haſt given me, be with me where I am," &c. Run through all the whole courſe of ſalvation, election, vocation, juſtification, glorification, you ſhall ſee his love in all of them. But it were an infinite argument to follow, to ſhew the love of Chriſt, which is beyond all knowledge; and it is too large for us to know all the dimenſions of it, to ſee the height, breadth, depth, and length of it, which we ſhould ever think, ſpeak, and meditate of; becauſe the ſoul is in the moſt fit temper to ſerve, love, and glorify God, when it has moſt apprehenſions of his great love.

This phraſe imports ſeveral things, 1. That there is no ſaving love to any out of the church, which is his love. It is, as it were, confined in the church, as if all the beams of his love met in the centre, as we ſee when the beams of the ſun meet in a glaſs, they burn, becauſe many are there united. So, in the church, all his love doth meet.

2. Then the church is his love alſo, becauſe whatſoever ſhe hath or hopes for, is from his love, and is nothing but his love. The church, as it is a church, is nothing but the love of Chriſt. That there is a church ſo endowed, ſo graced, ſo full of the hope of glory, it is out of his love.

And for the properties of it, 1. It is a free love, a preventing love. He loved us before ever we could love him; he loved us, when we reſiſted him, and were his enemies.

2. It is a moſt tender love, as you have it, Iſa. xlix. 15. "Can a mother forget her ſucking child? if ſhe ſhould, yet

will not I forget thee: thou art written on the palms of my hands," &c. He hath us in his heart, in his eye, in his hand, in a mother's heart, and beyond it: he hath a tender eye, and a powerful hand, to maintain his church.

3. It is a moſt tranſcendent and careful love; all comparifons are below it.

4. And it is a moſt intimate, invincible love, that nothing could quench it. As we ſee here, the church droopeth, and had many infirmities, yet ſhe is Chriſt's love; ſo that the love of Chriſt is a kind of love that is unconquerable, no water will ever quench it, no ſin of ours, no infirmity: So that it is very comfortable, that the church, conſidered under infirmities, is yet the love of Chriſt. "I ſleep, but my heart waketh," yet Chriſt comes with "my love, my dove, &c."

Queſt.—But cannot Chriſt ſee matter of weakneſs, ſinfulneſs, hatred, and diſlike in the church?

Anſ.—O yes, to pity, help, and heal it; but not to diminiſh his love, but to manifeſt it ſo much the more. His love is a tender love, ſenſible of all other things wherewith we diſpleaſe him; yet it is ſo invincible and unconquerable, that it overcomes all. Again, he ſees ill indeed in us; but he ſees in us ſome good of his own alſo, which moves him more to love, than that which is ill in us, moves him to hate; for what he ſees of ours, he ſees with a purpoſe to vanquiſh, mortify, and eat out: the ſpirit is as fire to conſume it; he is as water to waſh it. But what he ſees of his own, he ſees with a purpoſe to increaſe it more and more, and to perfect it; therefore he ſays, "My love," notwithſtanding that the church was aſleep.

Uſe.—This therefore ſerves greatly for our comfort, to ſearch what good Chriſt, by his ſpirit, hath wrought in our hearts, what faith, what love, what ſanctified judgment, what fire of holy affections to him, and to the beſt things. O let us value ourſelves by that which is good, that Chriſt hath in us. We are Chriſt's love, notwithſtanding we are ſleepy, if we be diſpleaſed with this our ſtate; that as Chriſt diſlikes it, ſo, if we by the ſpirit diſlike it, the matter is not what ſin we have in us, but how we are affected to it. Have we that ill in us, which is truly the grief of our hearts and ſouls, which, as Chriſt diſlikes, ſo we abhor it, and wiſh to be purged and rid of it; and it is the grief of our hearts and ſouls, that we cannot be

be better, and more lovely in Christ's eye? then let us not be discouraged: For Christ esteems of his church highly, even as his very love, even at that time when she was sleepy. This may teach us in time of temptation, not to hearken to Satan, who then moves us to look altogether upon that which is naught in us, thereby to abate our love to Christ, and our apprehension of his to us; for he knows, if we be sensible of the love of Christ to us, we shall love him again. For love is a kind of fire, an active quality, which will set us about glorifying God, and pulling down Satan's kingdom: as we say in nature, Fire doth all; what work almost can a man work without fire, by which all instruments are to be made and heated, &c. So grace doth all with love: God first doth manifest to our souls his love to us in Christ, and quicken us by his spirit, witnessing his love to us, wherewith he warms our hearts, kindles and inflames them so with love, that we love him again, which love hath a constraining sweet violence to put us upon all duties, to suffer, to do, to resist any thing. If a man be in love with Christ, nothing will be harsh to him in the world. The devil knows this well enough; therefore one of his main engines and temptations, is to weaken our hearts in the sense of God's love, and of Christ's; therefore let us be as wise for our souls, as he is subtle and politic against them; as watchful for our own comfort, as he is to discomfort us, and make us despair. Let us be wise to gather all the arguments of Christ's love that we can.

Quest.—But how shall we know that Christ loves us in this peculiar manner?

Ans.—1. Search what course he takes and hath taken to draw thee nearer unto him: "he chastiseth every one that he loveth." Seasonable corrections sanctified, are a sign of Christ's love, when he will not suffer us to thrive in sin, when we cannot speak, nor do amiss, but either he lasheth us in our conscience for it, and by his spirit checks us, or else stirs up others, one thing or other, to make us out of love with sin.

2. Again, we may gather Christ's love by this; if we have any love to divine things, and can set a great price upon the best things; upon the word, because it is Christ's word; upon grace, prizing the image of Christ, and the new creature; when we can set a high value upon communion with Christ, the

the ſenſe of his love in our hearts, and all ſpiritual prerogatives and excellencies above all things; this is an excellent argument of Chriſt's love to us. Our love is but a reflection of his; and therefore, if we have love to any thing that is good, we have it from him firſt. If a wall that is cold become hot, we ſay, the ſun, of neceſſity, muſt ſhine on it firſt, becauſe it is nothing but cold ſtone of itſelf. So, if our hearts, that are naturally cold, be heated with the love of divine things, certainly we may ſay, Chriſt hath ſhined here firſt; for, naturally, our hearts are of a cold temper, there is no ſuch thing as ſpiritual love growing in our natures and hearts.

You have many poor ſouls helped with this, who cannot tell whether Chriſt loves them or no; but this helps them a little; they can find undoubted arguments of their love to Chriſt, his image and ſervants, and of reliſhing the word, though they find corruption; and this their love to divine things, tells them by demonſtrations from the effects, that Chriſt loves them, becauſe there is no love to divine and ſupernatural things without the love of Chriſt firſt. And the graces in our hearts, they are love tokens given to the ſpouſe. Common favours he gives, as Abraham's gifts to his ſervants and others, but ſpecial gifts to his ſpouſe. If therefore there be any grace, a tender and ſoft heart, a prizing of the heavenly things, love to God's people and truth, then we may comfortably conclude Chriſt loves us, not only becauſe they are reflections of God's love, but becauſe they are jewels and ornaments that Chriſt only beſtows upon his ſpouſe, and not upon reprobates, ſuch precious jewels as theſe.

3. By diſcovering his ſecrets to us; that is an argument of love. Doth Chriſt by his Spirit diſcover the ſecret love he hath born to us before all worlds? doth he diſcover the breaſt of his Father, and his own heart to us? this diſcovery of affections, of entire love, ſheweth our happy ſtate; for that is one prerogative of friendſhip, and the chiefeſt diſcovery of ſecrets, when he gives us a particular right to truths, as our own, that we can challenge them, theſe are mine, theſe belong to me, theſe promiſes are mine This diſcovery of the ſecret love of God, and of the intereſt we have in the promiſes, is a ſign that Chriſt loves us, and that in a peculiar manner we are his love.

Uſe.—Let us be like our bleſſed Saviour, that where we ſee any ſaving goodneſs in any, let us love them; for ſhould not our love meet with our Saviour's love? Shall the church of God be

be the love of Chriſt, and ſhall it be our hatred; ſhall a good chriſtian be Chriſt's love, and ſhall he be the object of my hatred and ſcorn? can we imitate a better pattern? O let us never think our ſtate to be good, except every child of God be our love, as he is Chriſt's love! Can I love Chriſt, and cannot I love him in whom I ſee Chriſt? it is a ſign that I hate himſelf, when I hate his image. It is to be wondered at, that the devil hath prevailed with any ſo much, as to think they ſhould be in a good ſtate, when they have hearts riſing againſt the beſt people, and who, as they grow in grace, ſo they grow in their diſlike of them. Is here the ſpirit of Chriſt? And let them likewiſe be here reproved, that are glad to ſee any chriſtian halt, ſlip, and go aſtray. The beſt chriſtians in the world have that in part, which is wholly in another man; he hath fleſh in him. Shall we utterly diſlike a chriſtian for that? The church was now in a ſleepy condition, and yet notwithſtanding, Chriſt takes not the advantage of the weakneſs of the church, to caſhier and to hate her; but he pities her the more, and takes a courſe to bring her again into a good ſtate and condition. Let us not therefore be glad at the infirmities and failings of any, that diſcover any true goodneſs in them; it may be our own caſe ere long, it caſts them not out of Chriſt's love, but they dwell in his love ſtill; why ſhould we then caſt them out of our love and affections? Let them be our love ſtill, as they are the love of Chriſt, notwithſtanding their infirmities.

SERMON VII.

CANTICLES v. 2. 3.

"*My love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew,*
"*and my locks with the drops of night.*"

"*I have put off my coat, how ſhall I put it on? I have waſhed my*
"*feet, how ſhall I defile them?*"

THAT the life of a chriſtian is a perpetual conflicting, appears evidently in this book; the paſſages whereof, joined with our own experience, ſufficiently declare what combats, trials, and

and temptations the ſaints are ſubject unto after their new birth and change of life; now up, now down, now full of good reſolutions, now again ſluggiſh and ſlow, not to be waked nor brought forward by the voice of Chriſt; as it was with the church here, ſhe will not wake out of her ſleep to open unto Chriſt, though he call and knock, and ſtand waiting for entrance. She is now deſirous to pity herſelf, and needs no Peter to ſtir her up unto it, the fleſh of itſelf is prone enough to draw back and make excuſes, to hinder the power of grace from its due operation in us. She is laid along, as it were, to reſt her; yet is not ſhe ſo aſleep, but ſhe diſcerns the voice of Chriſt, but up and riſe ſhe will not.

Thus we may ſee the truth of that ſpeech of our Saviour verified, "That which is born of the fleſh is fleſh, and that which is born of the ſpirit is ſpirit." The fleſh pulls her back, the ſpirit would raiſe her up to open to Chriſt; he in the mean while makes her inexcuſable, and prepares her by his knocking, waiting, and departing, as for a ſtate of further humiliation, ſo for an eſtate of further exaltation. But how lovingly doth he ſpeak to her?

Open unto me, my love.

He calls her "my love," eſpecially for two reaſons, partly becauſe his love was ſettled upon her; it was in his own breaſt, but it reſted not there, but ſeated itſelf upon, and in the heart of his ſpouſe, ſo that ſhe became Chriſt's love. We know the heart of a lover is more where it loves than where it lives, (as we uſe to ſpeak) and indeed there is a kind of going out (as it were) to the thing beloved, with a heedleſſneſs of all other things, where the affection is in any exceſs, it carries the whole ſoul with it.

But beſides this, when Chriſt ſaith "my love," he ſhews, that as his love goes and plants and ſeats itſelf in the church, ſo it is united to that, and is not ſcattered to other objects. There are beams of God's general love ſcattered in the whole world; but this love, this exceeding love, is only faſtened upon the church. And indeed there is no love comparable to this love of Chriſt, which is above the love of women, of father, or mother, if we conſider what courſe he takes to ſhew it; for there could be nothing in the world ſo great to diſcover his love, as this gift, and gift of himſelf; and therefore he gave himſelf (the beſt thing in heaven or in earth) withal to ſhew his love, "The Father gave him."

him." When he was God equal with his Father, he loved his church, and gave himſelf for it; how could he diſcover his love better than to take our nature, to ſhew how he loved us? how could he come nearer to us, than by being incarnate? ſo to be bone of our bone, and fleſh of our fleſh, and took our nature to ſhew how he loved it. Love draws things nearer whereſoever it is. It drew him out of heaven to the womb of the virgin, there to be incarnate, and after that, when he was born not only to be a man, but a miſerable man, becauſe we could not be his ſpouſe, unleſs he purchaſed us by his death. We muſt be his ſpouſe by a ſatisfaction made to divine juſtice. God would not give us to him, but with ſalving his juſtice. What ſweet love is it to heal us not by ſearing or lancing, but by making a plaſter of his own blood, which he ſhed for thoſe who ſhed his in malice and hatred! What a wondrous love is it that he ſhould pour forth tears for thoſe who ſhed his blood, "O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem!" &c. that he prayed for thoſe that perſecuted him? and what wondrous love is it now, that he ſympathiſes with us in heaven, accounting the harm that is done to the leaſt member he hath, as done to himſelf? "Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?" and that he ſhould take us into one body with himſelf, to make one Chriſt; and he doth not content himſelf with any thing he can do for us here, but his deſire is that we may be one with him more and more, and be for ever with him in the heavens, as you have it in that excellent prayer, John xvii. 24.

Now this ſhould ſtir us up to be fully perſuaded of his love, who loves us ſo much. Chriſt's love in us is as the loadſtone to the iron, our hearts are heavy and downwards of themſelves. We may eſpecially know his love by this, that it draws us upwards and makes us heavenly-minded, it makes us deſire further and further communion with him; ſtill there is a magnetic attractive force in Chriſt's love, whereſoever it is, to draw the heart and affections after it.

Uſe—2. And we may know from hence one argument to prove the ſtability of the ſaints, and the immortality of the ſoul, becauſe Chriſt calls the church his love. The want of love again (where it is entire, and in any great meaſure) is a miſery. Chriſt therefore would ſuffer, if thoſe whom he hath planted his love upon, whom he loves truly, either ſhould fall away for ever, or ſhould not be immortal for ever. Chriſt will not loſe his love; and as it is an argument of perſevering in grace, ſo is it

it of an everlaſting being that this ſoul of ours hath, becauſe it is capable of the love of Chriſt, ſeeing there is a ſweet union and communion between Chriſt and the ſoul. It ſhould make Chriſt miſerable, as it were, in heaven the place of happineſs, if there ſhould not be a meeting of him and his ſpouſe. There muſt therefore be a meeting, which marriage is for ever, that both may be for ever happy one in another.

Uſe 3.—Let us often warm our hearts with the conſideration hereof, becauſe all our love is from this love of his. Oh the wonderful love of God! that ſuch tranſcendent majeſty and ſuch an infinite love ſhould dwell together! We ſay majeſty and love never dwell together, becauſe love is an abaſing of the ſoul to all ſervices; but herein it is falſe, for here majeſty and love dwell together in the heart of one Chriſt, which majeſty hath ſtooped as low as his almighty power could give leave. Nay, it was an almighty power that he could ſtoop ſo low, and yet be God, keeping his majeſty ſtill. For God to become man, to hide his majeſty for a while, not to be known to be God, and to hide ſo far in this nature, as to die for us; what an almighty power was this that could go ſo low, and yet preſerve himſelf God ſtill? yet this we ſee in our bleſſed Saviour; the greateſt majeſty met with the greateſt abaſement that ever was, and all out of love to our poor ſouls. There was no ſtooping, no abaſement that was ever ſo low as Chriſt was abaſed unto us, to want for a time, even the comfort of the preſence of his Father. There was an union of grace, but the union of ſolace and comfort that he had from him was ſuſpended for a time out of love to us, for he had a right in his own perſon to be in heaven preſently. Now for him to live ſo long out of heaven, and oft times, eſpecially towards his ſuffering, to be without that ſolace (that he might be a ſacrifice for our ſins) to have it ſuſpended for a time, what a condeſcending was this! It is ſaid, Pſal. cxiii. 6. that "God ſtoops to behold the things done here below." It is indeed a wondrous condeſcenſion, that God will look upon things below; but that he would become man, and, out of love to ſave us, ſuffer as he did here! this is wondrous aſtoniſhing humility! We think humility is not a grace becoming the majeſty of God: it is not ſo indeed; but there is ſome reſemblance of that grace in God, eſpecially in Chriſt, that he ſhould, to reveal himſelf, veil himſelf with fleſh, and all out of love to us. The conſideration of theſe things is wondrous effectual, to ſtrengthen faith,

faith, and to kindle love. Let theſe be for a taſte to direct our meditations herein. It follows,

My dove.

We know, when Chriſt was baptiſed, the Holy Ghoſt appeared in the ſhape of a dove (as a ſymbol of his preſence) to diſcover thus much, that Chriſt ſhould have the property and diſpoſition of a dove, and be meek and gentle; for indeed he became man for that end, to be a merciful Saviour; "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly;" and, "I will not quench the ſmoaking flax, nor break the bruiſed reed," &c. ſaid he; and therefore the ſpirit appeared upon him in the ſhape of a dove: as likewiſe, to ſhew what his office ſhould be; for even as the dove in Noah's ark was ſent out, and came home again to the ark with an olive branch, to ſhew that the waters were abated; ſo Chriſt was to preach deliverance from the deluge of God's anger, and to come with an olive leaf of peace and reconciliation in his mouth, to ſhew that God's wrath was appeaſed. When he was born, the angels ſung "Glory to God on high, on earth peace, and good will to men:" now as Chriſt had the ſpirit in the likeneſs of a dove; ſo all that are Chriſt's, the ſpouſe of Chriſt, have the diſpoſition of Chriſt; that ſpirit that framed him to be like a dove, frames the church to be a dove, as the ointment that was poured on Aaron's head ran down upon the loweſt ſkirts of his garments.

Now the church is compared to a dove, partly for the diſpoſition that is and ſhould be in the church reſembling that creature; and partly alſo for that the church is in a mournful ſuffering condition: For the like diſpoſition is to be found in a dove. There is ſome good in all creatures; there is no creature but it hath a beam of God's majeſty, of ſome attribute, but ſome more than others. There is an image of virtue even in the inferior creatures; wherefore the ſcripture ſends us to them for many virtues, as the ſluggard to the ant; and indeed we may ſee the true perfection of the firſt creation, the ſtate of it more in the creatures than in ourſelves, for there is not ſuch degeneracy in any creature as there is in man.

1. Now that which in a dove the ſcripture aims at, we ſhould reſemble a dove in, is his meekneſs eſpecially. The church is meek both to God and man not given to murmurings and revenge; meek, that is, "I held my tongue without murmuring,

muring," as it is in the Pſalm, "I was dumb," &c. which is a grace that God's ſpirit frames in the heart of the church, and every particular chriſtian, even to be meek towards God by a "holy ſilence," and likewiſe towards men to put on "the bowels of meekneſs," as we are exhorted, Coloſſ. iv. 12. "As the elect of God put on the bowels of meekneſs and compaſſion," &c. Hereby we ſhall ſhew ourſelves to be Chriſt's, and to have the ſpirit of Chriſt. And this grace diſpoſeth us to a nearer communion with God than other graces; it is a grace that God delights in, and would have his ſpouſe to be adorned with, as is ſhewed, 1 Pet. iii. 4. where the Apoſtle tells women it is the beſt jewel and ornament they can wear, and is with God of great price. Moſes, we read, was a mighty man in prayer, and a ſpecial means to fit him thereunto, was becauſe he was the meekeſt man on earth; and therefore Zeph. ii. 1, 2. "Seek the Lord, ſeek meekneſs;" and it fits a man for communion with God, for "God reſiſteth the proud, and giveth grace to the meek and humble." It is a grace that empties the ſoul of ſelf conceit, to think a man's ſelf unworthy of any thing, and ſo makes it capacious, low, and fit for God to fill with a larger meaſure of his ſpirit; it takes away the roughneſs and ſwelling of the ſoul that keeps out God and grace; therefore in that grace we muſt eſpecially be like this meek creature, that hath no way to revenge itſelf.

2. Again, it is a ſimple creature, without guile, it hath no way to defend itſelf, but only by flight. There is a ſimplicity that is ſinful, when there is no mixture of wiſdom in it. There is a ſimplicity that is a pure ſimplicity, and ſo God is ſimple, which ſimplicity of God is the ground of many other attributes; for thereupon he is eternal, becauſe there is nothing contrary in him, there is no mixture in him of any thing oppoſite, ſo that is a good ſimplicity in us, where there is no mixture of fraud, no duplicity in the ſoul; a double hearted man is inconſtant and unſtable in all his ways. Now ſimplicity as it is a virtue, ſo we muſt imitate the dove in it, for there is a ſinful dove-like ſillineſs; for Hoſea vii. 11. Ephraim is ſaid there to be like "a ſilly dove without heart, they call to Egypt, they go to Aſſyria." There is a fatal ſimplicity uſually going before deſtruction, when we hate thoſe that defend us, and account them enemies, and rely more upon them that are enemies indeed than upon friends. So it was with Ephraim before his deſtruction; he was a ſilly dove without heart, he called to Egypt, and went to Aſſyria (falſe

(falſe friends) that were enemies to the church of God; yet they truſted in them more than in God or the prophets Men have a world of tricks to undermine their friends, to ruin them, and to deſerve ill of thoſe that wiſh with all their hearts to deſerve well of them, when yet, in the mean time, they can gratify the enemy, pleaſe them, and hold correſpondence with them, as here Ephraim did. "Ephraim is a ſilly dove." This therefore is not that which we muſt aim at; but to be ſimple, and children, concerning evil, but not in ignorance and ſimplicity that way.

3. Again, this creature is a faithful creature; that is mainly here aimed at, it is faithful to his mate: ſo the chriſtian ſoul, by the ſpirit of God, it is made faithful to Chriſt, it keeps the judgment chaſte, is not tainted with errors and ſins; he keeps his affection chaſte likewiſe; ſets nothing in his heart above Chriſt; whom hath he in heaven but him, and what is there in earth he deſires beſides him? You know, in the Revelation, the ſpouſe of Chriſt is brought in like a virgin contracted, but the Romiſh church, like a whore. Therefore the church of God muſt take heed of the Romiſh church, for that is not a dove; we muſt be virgins who muſt keep chaſte ſouls to Chriſt, as you have it, Rev. xiv. 4. "Thoſe that follow the Lamb, whereſoever he goeth, they have not defiled themſelves with women:" the meaning is ſpiritual, namely, that they have not defiled themſelves with adultery, nor ſpiritual fornication; they have chaſte hearts to Chriſt: ſo, in this reſpect, they reſemble the dove. Theſe therefore that draw away from the love of religion to mixture, to be meretrices and harlots, in religion, they are not Chriſt's doves; as far as they yield to this, it is an argument that they have falſe hearts. Chriſt's church is a dove, ſhe keeps cloſe and inviolate to him.

4. Again, this creature is of a cleanly diſpoſition; it will not lodge where it ſhall be troubled with ſtench, and annoyed that way; and likewiſe feeds neatly on pure grain, not upon carrion, as you ſee in the ark, when the raven was ſent out, it lights upon carrion, of which there was then plenty, and therefore never came into the ark again; but the dove, when ſhe went out, would not light upon carrion, or dead things, and ſo finding no fit food, came back again into the ark. So the chriſtian ſoul, in this reſpect, is like a dove, that will not feed upon worldly carrion, or ſinful pleaſures, but upon Chriſt and ſpiritual things. The ſoul of a carnal and a natural man uſeth to feed upon duſt,

earth, and earthly things; when the ſoul of a true chriſtian, that hath the taſte of grace, feeds cleanly, it will not feed on that which is baſe and earthly, but upon heavenly and ſpiritual things.

5. It is a bird that loves communion and fellowſhip, as the prophet ſpeaks, "Who are thoſe that flock to the windows as doves?" for they uſed to flock to their houſes by companies. So the children of God love the communion and fellowſhip one of another, and keep ſevered from the world, as ſoon as ever they are ſeparated from it; delighting in all thoſe of the ſame nature. Doves will conſort with doves, chriſtians with chriſtians, and none elſe; they can reliſh no other company. Theſe, and ſuch like properties, may profitably be conſidered of the dove. The much ſtanding upon theſe, were to wrong the intention of the ſpirit of God; and to neglect them altogether, were as much. Therefore we have touched upon ſome properties only.

Now, for the ſufferings of the church, it is like a dove in this, the dove is moleſted by all the birds of prey; it being the common prey of all other ravenous birds. So the poor church of God is perſecuted and moleſted. "Oh that I had wings like a dove," &c. ſaith holy David. It is an old ſpeech, and it is for ever true, that crows, and ſuch, eſcape better than doves. The puniſhment that ſhould light on ravens, often times lights on doves. Thus God's dove, God's church, is uſed.

But, What defence hath God's poor church? Why, no defence: But,

1. Flight; even as the dove hath nothing but flight, it hath no talents to wound, but it hath flight: ſo we are to fly to God as to our mountain; fly to the ark, that God may take us in. The church of God hath no other refuge, but to be houſed in God and Chriſt—he is our ark.

2. And to mourn, as Hezekiah ſaith of himſelf, Iſa. xxxviii. "He mourned as a dove, and chattered as a crane." The ſtate of the church of God is like the turtle's, to mourn in all afflictions, deſertions, and moleſtations of wicked men; to mourn to God, who hears the bemoanings of his own ſpirit in them: and woe to all other birds, the birds of prey, when the turtles mourn becauſe of their cruelty; it is a preſage of ruin to them, when they force the turtle to ſorrow and mourning.

3. They

3. They have another refuge, beſides flight and mourning; which is, to build high from vermin that would otherwiſe moleſt. Inſtinct teacheth them thus to eſcape their enemies by building high, and ſo to ſecure themſelves: ſo there is in God's children, a gracious inſtinct put, an antipathy to the enemies of it, which tends to their ſafety, in that they mingle not themſelves with them. And likewiſe, God breeds in them a familiarity with himſelf, and ſtirs them to build on him as on a rock, to be ſafe in him.

But you will object, If the church of God be his dove, why is it ſo with it as it is; that God ſhould ſuffer his love and his dove, and his turtle, thus, as it were, to be preyed upon? "Give not the ſoul of thy turtle to the beaſts," ſaith the Pſalmiſt. If the church was God's dove, he would eſteem more of it than he doth, and not ſuffer it to be perſecuted thus.

Anſ.—God never forſakes his dove, but is an ark for it to fly to, a rock for it to build on. The dove hath always a refuge in God, and in Chriſt, in the worſt time. You have a notable place for this, Pſal. lxviii. 13. "Though you have lien among the pots," that is, ſmeared and ſullied, "yet you ſhall be as the wings of a dove covered with ſilver, and her feathers with yellow gold; when the almighty ſcattereth kings in it, it was white as the ſnow in Salmon." So, though the church of God lies among the pots awhile, all ſmeared and ſoiled, and ſullied with the ill uſage of the world; yet as long as it keeps itſelf a dove, unſpotted from the filth of the world and ſin, though it be ſmeared with the ill uſage thereof, we ſee what God promiſeth here; "yet ſhall they be as the wings of a dove covered with ſilver, and her feathers with yellow gold." So God will bring forth his dove with glory out of all theſe abaſements at length. So much for thetitle of dove. It follows,

My Undefiled.

Undefiled is a high word to be applied to the church of God here; for the church groaning under infirmities, to be counted perfect and undefiled; but Chriſt, who judgeth aright of his church, and knows beſt what ſhe is; he yet thus judgeth of her. But how is that? The church is undefiled, eſpecially in that it is the ſpouſe of Chriſt, and cloathed with the robes of his righteouſneſs. For there is an exchange as ſoon as we are united to Chriſt, our ſins are upon him, and righteouſneſs is

made ours; and therefore, in Chriſt, the church is undefiled. Chriſt himſelf, the ſecond perſon, is the firſt lovely thing next to the Father; and in Chriſt, all things, as they have relation to him, are loved, as they are in him. Chriſt's human nature is next loved to the ſecond perſon; it is united, and is firſt pure, holy, and beloved. Then becauſe the church is Chriſt myſtical, it is near to him; and, in a manner, as near as that ſacred body of his, both making up one Chriſt myſtical; and ſo is amiable, and beloved, even of God himſelf, who hath pure eyes, yet in this reſpect, looks upon the church as undefiled.

Chriſt and his church are not to be conſidered as two, when we ſpeak of this undefiledneſs, but as one. And the church, having Chriſt, and all that is his, they have the field, and the pearl in the field together; and Chriſt, giving himſelf to the church, he gives his righteouſneſs, his perfection, and holineſs—all is the church's.

But how can it be the church's, when it is not in the church, but in Chriſt?

It is ſafe for the church that it is in Chriſt, who is perfect and undefiled for us, to make us appear ſo. And ſo it is in Chriſt, the ſecond Adam, for our good: it is not in him as another perſon; but it is in him, as the church's head, that make both one Chriſt. The hand and the foot ſee not; but both hand and foot have benefit by the eye that ſees for them. There is no member of the body underſtands, but the head does all for them. Put the caſe, we have not abſolute righteouſneſs and undefiledneſs in our own natures and perſons inhering in us; yet we have it in Chriſt who is one with us, who hath it for our good. It is ours, for all the comfort and good that we may have by it; and thereupon the church in Chriſt is undefiled; yea, even then, when it feels its own defilements. And here ariſeth that wondrous contradiction that is found in a believer's apprehenſion. The nature of faith is to apprehend righteouſneſs, in the ſenſe of ſin; happineſs in the ſenſe of miſery, and favour in the ſenſe of diſpleaſure.

And the ground of it is; becauſe that, at the ſame time, the ſoul may be in ſome meaſure, defiled in itſelf, and yet notwithſtanding be undefiled in her head and huſband Chriſt. Hence, the guilty ſoul, when it feels corruption and ſin, yet notwithſtanding doth ſee itſelf holy and clean in Chriſt the head; and ſo

at

at once there is a conſcience of ſin, and no more conſcience of ſin, as the apoſtle ſaith, Heb. x. 2. when we believe in Chriſt, who are purged with his blood; that is, there is no more guilt of ſin binding over to eternal damnation; yet notwithſtanding, always there is a conſcience of ſin, for we are guilty of infirmities: "and if we ſay we have no ſin, we lie and deceive ourſelves."

Queſt.—But how can this be, that there ſhould be a conſcience of ſin, and no conſcience of ſin, a ſinner, and yet a perfect ſaint, and undefiled?

Anſ. 1.—The conſcience knows its own imperfection, ſo it is defiled, and accuſeth of ſin: and, as it looks to Chriſt, ſo it ſees itſelf pure, and purged from all ſin; here is the conqueſt, fight, and the victory of faith in the deepeſt ſenſe of ſin, pollution and defilement in ourſelves; at the ſame time to ſee an abſolute and perfect righteouſneſs in Jeſus Chriſt. Herein is even the triumph of faith whereby it anſwers God. And Chriſt, who ſees our imperfections (but it is to purge and cleanſe them away, not to damn us for them), at the ſame time he ſees us in his own love, cloathed with his righteouſneſs, as one with himſelf, endowed with whatſoever he hath, his ſatisfaction and obedience being ours, as verily as any thing in the world is. Thus he looks on us, and thus faith looks upon him too, and together with the ſight and ſenſe of ſin, at the ſame time, it apprehends righteouſneſs, perfect righteouſneſs, and ſo is undefiled. This is the main point in religion, and the comfort of chriſtians, to ſee their perfection in Chriſt Jeſus, and to be loſt in themſelves, as it were, and to be only found in him, not having their own righteouſneſs, but the righteouſneſs of God in him. This is a myſtery which none knows but a believing ſoul; none ſee corruption more, none ſee themſelves freed more, they have an inward ſight to ſee corruption, and an inward faith to ſee God takes not advantage at it. And ſurely there can be no greater honour to Chriſt than this, in the ſenſe of ſin, of wants, imperfections, ſtains, and blemiſhes; yet to wrap ourſelves in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt God-man, and by faith being thus covered with that abſolute righteouſneſs of Chriſt, with boldneſs to go clothed in the garments of this our elder brother, to the throne of grace This is an honour to Chriſt, to attribute ſo much to his righteouſneſs; that being clothed therewith, we can boldly break through the fire of God's juſtice and all thoſe ter-

rible attributes, when we ſee them all, as it were, ſatisfied fully in Chriſt: for Chriſt, with his righteouſneſs, could go through the juſtice of God, having ſatisfied it to the full for us. And we being cloathed with this his righteouſneſs and ſatisfaction, may go through too.

But beſides that, there is another undefiledneſs in the church, in reſpect to which ſhe is called undefiled, that is, in purity of diſpoſition, tending to perfection. And God reſpects her according to her better part, and according to what he will bring her in due time. For we are choſen unto perfection, and to be holy in his ſight, and perfectly holy, undefiled and pure; we are not choſen to weak beginnings.

In chooſing us, what did God aim at? Did he aim at theſe imperfect beginnings to reſt there? No, we were elected and choſen to perfection: for, as it is in this natural life, God purpoſed that we ſhould not only have all the limbs of men, but grow from infancy to activeneſs and perfection: As God at firſt intended ſo much for our bodies, no queſtion he intends as much alſo for the ſoul, that we ſhould not only have the lineaments of chriſtianity, a ſanctified judgement with affections in part renewed; but he hath choſen us to perfection by degrees. As the ſeed firſt lies rotting in the ground, then grows to a ſtalk, and then to a ear: ſo God's wiſdom ſhines here by bringing things by degrees to perfection and undefiledneſs. His wiſdom will have it thus, or elſe his power might have it otherwiſe, becauſe he will have us to live by faith, to truſt his mercy in Chriſt, and not to the undefiledneſs that is begun in us, but to admire that which we have in Chriſt himſelf.

And indeed it is the character of a judicious believing chriſtian ſoul, that he can ſet a price, and value the righteouneſs of Chriſt out of himſelf, labouring, living and dying, to appear in that, and yet to comfort and ſuſtain himſelf during this conflict and fight between the fleſh and the ſpirit, that in time this inherent grace ſhall be brought to perfection.

And ſo Chriſt looks upon us, as he means to perfect the work of grace in by us little and little, as he means to purge and cleanſe us, as Epheſ. v. 26. 27. The end of redemption is that he might purge his church, and ſo never leave it till he has made it a glorious ſpouſe in heaven. He looks upon us, as we ſhall be ere long, and therefore we are ſaid to be dead to ſin, while

while we are but dying to it. And, ſaith he, "you have crucified the fleſh, with the affections and luſts thereof," when we are but crucifying it; but it is ſaid ſo, becauſe it is as ſure to be done, as if it were done already. As a man, when he is condemned, and going to his execution, he is a dead man: ſo there is a ſentence paſſed upon ſin and corruption, it ſhall be aboliſhed and die. Therefore it is dead in ſentence, and is dying in execution. It is done; "They that are in Chriſt have crucified the fleſh, with the luſts thereof. It is as ſure to faith as if it were done already. So we are ſaid to ſit in heavenly places with Chriſt, we are with him already: for Chriſt, having taken us ſo near in affection to himſelf, he will never leave us, till he have made us ſuch as he may have full contentment in, which is in heaven, when the contract between him and us ſhall be fulfilled in conſummation of the marriage. Thus faith looks, and Chriſt looks thus upon us: Which ſhould comfort us in weakneſs, that God regards us not in our preſent imperfections, but as he means to make us ere long. In the meantime, that he may look upon us in love, he looks upon us in the obedience of his Son, in whom, whatſoever is good, ſhall be perfected at the laſt.

Uſe 1.—What ſhould we do then, if Chriſt doth make his church thus, his love, his dove, his undefiled, by making his love to meet in it as the centre thereof, whereunto he doth confine all his love, as it were; we ſhould confine our love to him again, and have no love out of Chriſt, ſince he hath no love out of us: There ſhould be an everlaſting mutual ſhining and reflexion between him and the ſoul. We ſhould lay open our ſouls to his love, as indeed he deſires eſpecially the communion of our affections, we ſhould reflect love to him again. This perpetual everlaſting intercourſe between Chriſt and his ſpouſe, is her main happineſs here, and her eternal happineſs in heaven. In looking on him, who hath done ſo much for us, he ſhines on us, and we look back again upon him. Doth Chriſt love us ſo intimately, and ſo invincibly, that no indignities nor ſin could overcome his love? which made, that he endured that which he hates moſt, to become ſin for us; nay, the want of that, which was more to him than all the world, the want of the ſenſe of the favour of God for a time. "My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?" Hath Chriſt thus infinitely loved us, and ſhall not we back again make him our love? In their degree the ſaints of God have all done ſo.

It was a good ſpeech of Ignatius the martyr, "My love Chriſt was crucified." So a chriſtian ſhould ſay, My love was crucified, my love died, my love is heaven; and for the things on earth I love them, as they have a beam of him in them, as they lead me to him; but he is my love, there my love is pitched, even upon him; this is the ground of theſe ſcripture phraſes, "But our converſation is heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt," &c. "and ſet your affections on the things that are above." Why? Chriſt, our love, is there, the ſoul is more where it loves, than where its reſidence is." It dies, as it were, to other things, and lives in the things it loves; therefore our thoughts and affections, our joy and delight ſhould be drawn up to Chriſt; for indeed his love had ſuch a magnetical attractive force, that where it is, it will draw up the heavy iron, the groſs ſoul, and make it heavenly; for there is a binding, a drawing force in this excellent affection of love.

My love, my dove, &c.

Uſe 2.—Theſe are all words of ſweetneſs, he labours to expreſs all the affection he can; for the conſcience is ſubject to upbraid, and to clamour much, ſo that there muſt be a great deal of perſuaſion, to ſtill the accuſing conſcience of a ſinner, to ſet it down, make it quiet, and perſuade it of God's love. Therefore he uſeth all heavenly rhetoric, to perſuade and move the affections.

Uſe 3.—In this, that the church is undefiled in Chriſt, let us learn, when afflicted in conſcience, not ſo much to judge of ourſelves, by what we feel in ourſelves, as by what faith ſuggeſts. In Chriſt, therefore, let us judge of ourſelves by what we are as in him. We are poor in ourſelves, but have riches in him; we die in ourſelves in regard of this life; but we have a life in him, an eternal life; and we are ſinners in ourſelves, but we have a righteouſneſs in him, whereby we are righteous in his ſight. We are fooliſh, unſkilful, and ignorant in ourſelves; but he is our wiſdom in all whatſoever is amiſs in us. Let us labour to ſee a full ſupply of our wants made up in Chriſt; this is to glorify God, as much as if we could fulfil the law perfectly. If we were as undefiled as Adam was, we could not glorify God more, than when we find ourſelves, and our conſcience guilty of ſins; yet thus, by the ſpirit of God, to go out of ourſelves, and to ſee ourſelves in Chriſt, and thus to caſt ourſelves on him, embrace him, and take

take that gift of God given us, Chriſt offered to us, becauſe God ſo commands; we honour God more, than if we had the obedience that Adam had at firſt before his fall: For now, in the covenant of grace, he will be glorified in his mercy, in his forgiving, forbearing, rich tranſcendent mercy; and in going beyond all our unworthineſs and ſins, by ſhewing that there is a righteouſneſs provided for us, the righteouſneſs of God-man; whoſe obedience and ſatisfaction is more than our diſobedience, becauſe it is the diſobedience of man only; but his obedience and righteouſneſs is the obedience and righteouſneſs of God-man: ſo it ſatisfieth divine juſtice; and therefore ought to ſatisfy conſcience to the full; our faith muſt anſwer Chriſt's carriage to us; we muſt therefore account ourſelves in him undefiled; becauſe he account us ſo, not in ourſelves, but as we have a being in him, we are undefiled.

Uſe 4.—Again, ſee here Chriſt accounts us, (even in regard of habitual grace), undefiled; though we have for the preſent many corruptions. Let us therefore learn a leſſon of moderation of ſo excellent a teacher: let us not be aſhamed to learn of our Saviour. What ſpirit ſhall we think they have, that will unchurch churches, becauſe they have ſome defilement and unbrotherly brethren, accounting them no churches, no brethren, becauſe they have ſome imperfections. Why hath not Chriſt a quarrel to the church then? is he blind? doth his love make him blind? No, he ſeeth corruption, but he ſees better things, ſomewhat of his own, that makes him overlook thoſe imperfections, becauſe they are ſuch as he means to mortify, ſubdue, wear away, and to fire out by the power of his ſpirit, which as fire ſhall waſte all thoſe corruptions in time. So it is with the church; although ſhe hath ſome corruption, that it be not with her, as it ſhould be, yet ſhe is a church notwithſtanding. The church of Corinth, we ſee, Paul ſtiles them Saints and Brethren, with all thoſe ſweet names, notwithſtanding they had many corruptions among them.

Uſe 5. We have a company of malignant ſpirits worſe than theſe a great deal, atheiſtical perſons, who have no religion at all; who, out of malice and envy, watch for the halting of good chriſtians, who can ſee nothing but defilement in thoſe that have any good in them, nothing but hypocriſy, mopiſhneſs, all that is naught; who, if they can deviſe any blemiſh, put it upon them; whereas Chriſt ſees a great deal of ill in the church

church, but he ſees it to pardon, ſubdue, and pity the church for it, extolling and magnifying its goodneſs. What ſpirits are thoſe of, that watch to ſee imperfections in others, that their hearts tell them are better than they, that they may only diſgrace them by it; for goodneſs, they will ſee none.

Uſe 6.—And likewiſe, it ſhould teach us not to wrong ourſelves with falſe judgment. We ſhould have a double eye; one eye to ſee what is amiſs in us, our own imperfections, thereby to carry ourſelves in a perpetual humility; but another eye of faith, to ſee what we have in Chriſt, our perfection in him; ſo to account of ourſelves, and glory in this our beſt being, that in him we have a glorious being, ſuch an one whereby God eſteems us perfect, and undefiled in him only. The one of which ſights ſhould enforce us to the other, which is one end, why God, in this world, leaves corruption in his children. Oh! ſince I am thus undefiled, ſhall I reſt in myſelf? is there any harbour for me to reſt in my own righteouſneſs? O no, it drives a man out of all harbour; nay, I will reſt in that righteouſneſs, which God hath wrought by Chriſt, who is God-man; that will endure the ſight of God, being cloathed, with which I can endure the preſence of God. So this ſight of our own unworthineſs and wants, ſhould not be a ground of diſcouragement, but a ground to drive us perfectly out of ourſelves, that by faith we might renew our title to that righteouſneſs, wherein is our eſpecial glory. Why ſhould we not judge of ourſelves as Chriſt doth? Can we ſee more in ourſelves than he doth? yet, notwithſtanding all he ſees, he accounts us as undefiled.

Uſe 7.—Again, ſince he accounts us undefiled, becauſe he means to make us ſo, and now looks on us as we ſhall be; in all our foils and infirmities, let us comfort ourſelves, it ſhall not be thus always with us. O! this fleſh of mine ſhall fall and fall ſtill, and ſhall decay as Saul's houſe; and the ſpirit at the laſt conquer in all this. I am choſen to triumph, to perfection of grace, this is my comfort. Thus we ſhould comfort ourſelves, and ſet upon our enemies, and conflict in this hope of victory, I ſhall get the better of myſelf at the laſt. Imperfection ſhall not diſcourage but comfort us in this world; we are choſen to perfection. Let us ſtill rejoice, in that we are choſen to ſanctification, which is a little begun, being an earneſt of other bleſſings; let us not reſt in the pledge or in the earneſt, but labour for a further pledge of more ſtrength and grace,

grace: For thoſe that have the ſpirit of Chriſt, will ſtrive to be as much unſpotted, and as heavenly as they can; to fit themſelves for that heavenly condition as much as may be, when, becauſe they cannot be in heaven, yet they will converſe there as much as they can; and becauſe they cannot be with ſuch company altogether, they will be as much as may be, labouring, as they are able, to be that which they ſhall be hereafter. Imperfection contents them not; and therefore they pray ſtill in the Lord's prayer, "Thy kingdom come." While there is any imperfection, their hearts are enlarged more and more, nothing contents them but perfection. And indeed God accounts us thus unſpotted for this end, becauſe he would encourage us. Where he ſees the will and endeavour, he gives the title of the thing deſired.

Verſe 3.—*I have put off my coat, how ſhall I put it on? I have waſhed my feet, how ſhall I defile them?*

Here is an ingenuous confeſſion made by the church of her own untowardneſs, notwithſtanding all Chriſt's heavenly rhetoric and perſuaſion that he uſed; yet ſhe draws back, and ſeems to have reaſon ſo to do; "I have put off my coat, how ſhall I put it on again" to let thee in, "I have waſhed my feet," &c. It is a phraſe taken from the cuſtom of thoſe hot countries, wherein they uſed to waſh their feet. "I have waſhed my feet, how ſhall I defile them" to riſe and open the door unto thee? There is a ſpiritual meaning herein, as if ſhe had ſaid, I have ſome eaſe by this ſleepy profeſſion, ſome freedom from evil tongues, and ſome exemption and immunity from ſome troubles I was in before. I was then perhaps too indiſcreet, now wilt thou call me again to thoſe troubles that I have wiſely avoided? No; "I have put off my coat, how ſhall I put on? I have waſhed my feet, how ſhall I defile them?" I like this ſtate very well; I am content to be as I am, without further troubling of myſelf: Thus the church puts off Chriſt. This I take to be the meaning of the words. That which is obſervable is this, That it is not an eaſy matter to bring the ſoul and Chriſt together into near fellowſhip. We ſee here how the church draws back; for the fleſh moves either not to yield at all to duty, or to be cold, uncertain, and unſettled therein; the fleſh knows that a near communion with Chriſt cannot ſtand with favouring any corruption, and therefore the fleſh will do ſomething, but not enough, it will yield to ſomething, but not to that which it ſhould do, to that communion

communion and fellowſhip that we ought to have with Chriſt. To inſtance in ſome particulars, as a rule and meaſure to ſomewhat of which we ſhould be.

A chriſtian life ſhould be nothing but a communion and intercourſe with Chriſt; a walking in the ſpirit, and to be ſpiritual, and to ſavour the things of the ſpirit altogether, he ſhould ſtudy to adorn his profeſſion by a lively and chearful performance of duty, and be exemplary to others, and ſhould be in ſuch a frame as he ſhould walk continually in the comforts of the Holy Ghoſt undiſmayed and undaunted, and abound in the fruits of the ſpirit, and do all the good he can whereſoever he comes; he ſhould keep himſelf unſpotted from the world, go againſt the ſtream, and be continually in ſuch a temper, as it ſhould be the joy of his heart to be diſſolved and to be with Chriſt. One might go on thus in a world of particulars, which would be too long. If we could attain to this excellency, it were an happy life, a heaven upon earth; this we ſhould aim at. Will the fleſh endure this, think you? No, it will not; which you ſhall ſee more particularly in this next obſervation, which is, that one way whereby the unregenerate part in us hinders this communion with Chriſt, and the ſhining of a believer in a chriſtian courſe, is by falſe pretences, reaſons, and excuſes; "I have waſhed my feet, I have put off my coat," &c.

The fleſh never wants excuſes and pretences (there was never yet any came to hell, but they had ſome ſeeming pretence for their coming thither) to ſhift and ſhuffle off duties; there was never yet any careleſs ſinful courſe but it had the fleſh to juſtify it with one reaſon or other; and therefore it is good to underſtand the ſophiſtical ſhifts of the fleſh, and pretences and ſhews which it hath; and as it is good to know the truth of God and of Chriſt revealed in his word, ſo is it to know the falſeneſs and the deceitfulneſs of our own hearts, they are both myſteries almoſt alike hard to be known. Labour we then more and more to know the falſehood of our own diſpoſition, and to know the truth of God. To give inſtance in a few particulars; you ſee in the church the difficulty of her communion with Chriſt comes from idle pretences and excuſes ſhe hath. Every one hath his ſeveral pretexts, as his ſtate and condition is. We think we ſhould be loſers if we give ourſelves to that degree of goodneſs which others do, whereas God doth curſe thoſe bleſſings which men get with neglect of duty to him. If we ſeek firſt the kingdom

dom of heaven, all other things that are good for us ſhall be caſt upon us.

Object.—Thou ſhalt loſe the favour of ſuch a one.

Anſ.—Never care for that favour thou canſt not keep with God's favour, the favour of man is a ſnare, take heed of that favour which enſnares thee; thou loſeſt their favour and company, but thou gaineſt the favour of Chriſt and company of angels.

Object.—But they will rail on thee, and reproach thee with thy old ſins.

Anſ.—Care not, "God will do thee good for that," as David ſaid when Shimei curſed him.

Object.—But I ſhall loſe my pleaſure.

Anſ.—Oh but ſuch pleaſures end in death; they are but pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon, and thou ſhalt not loſe by the change; the ways of wiſdom are pleaſant ways, one day religiouſly ſpent in keeping of a good conſcience, what a ſweet farewell hath it! "Joy is in the habitations of the righteous. It becomes the righteous to be joyful." However outwardly it ſeems, yet there is a paradiſe within. Many ſuch objections the fleſh makes, ſome take ſcandal at the proſperity of the wicked, and affliction of the ſaints, and from hence take occaſion to rot in their dregs of ſin; but what ſaith Chriſt? "Happy is the man who is not offended in me;" as for the proſperity of the wicked, envy them not, they ſtand in ſlippery places, and flouriſh like a green bay tree, but preſently they vaniſh. Take no offence at them nor at the croſs; look not at this, but at the enſuing comfort, "Bleſſed are they that ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake;" bind ſuch words to your head as your crown, God reſerves the beſt comforts to the worſt times, his people never find it otherwiſe.

Object.—Ay, but if I be thus preciſe, the times are ſo bad, I ſhall be alone.

Anſ.—Complain not of the times when thou makeſt them worſe, thou ſhouldſt make the times better; he worſe the times are, the better be thou, for this is thy glory, to be good in an evil generation; this was Lot's glory; Paul tells what ill times they were, but ſaith he, "Our converſation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour." What brings deſtruction on God's people, but their joining with the wicked? When they joined with the children of men, then came the flood. Theſe

and

and the like pretences keep men altogether from goodneſs, or elſe from ſuch a meaſure as may bring honour to God and comfort to themſelves.

Or if men be great, why this is not honourable to do thus, as you know Michal ſaid to David, "How glorious was the king of Iſrael this day? like a fool," &c. To attend upon the word of God with reverence, to make conſcience of religion, Oh it ſtands not with greatneſs, &c. But the ſpirit of God anſwereth this in him, "I will yet be more vile for God." It is a man's honour here to ſtand for God and for good things; and it is our honour that God will honour us ſo much.

Thoſe likewiſe that are worldly have excuſes alſo: Alas I muſt mind my calling; and they have ſcripture for it too, "He that provides not for his family is worſe than an infidel," as if God had ſet up any callings to hinder the calling of chriſtianity, as if that were not the greateſt calling, and the beſt part that will abide with us for ever, as if it were not the part of a chriſtian to redeem time from his calling, to the duties of chriſtianity. I have no time (ſaith the worldling), what will you have me to do? Why, what time had David, when he meditated on the law of God day and night? He was a king, the king is bound to ſtudy the ſcriptures; and yet, whoſe employment is greater than the employment of the chief magiſtrate?

And thus every one, as their ſtate and condition is, have ſeveral pretences and excuſes. Thoſe that are young, their excuſe is, We have time enough for theſe things hereafter. Others, as thoſe that were negligent to build the ſecond temple, "The time is not yet, ſay they;" when as the uncertainty of this life of ours, the weightineſs of the buſineſs, the danger of the cuſtom of ſin, the engaging of our hearts deeper and deeper into the world, makes it a more difficult thing to be a chriſtian. It more and more hardens our underſtanding the more we ſin, and the more it eſtrangeth our affections from good things, the more we have run out in an evil courſe. Time is a ſpecial mercy, but when thou haſt not time only, but the means, good company and good motions, thou mayeſt never have ſuch a gale again, thy heart may be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin. Again, who would want the comforts of religion for the preſent, (as Auſtin ſaith) "I have wanted thy ſweetneſs too long." What folly is it to want the ſweetneſs and comfort of religion ſo long as we may have it?

Some

Some others pretend the uncomfortableneſs of religion. I ſhall want my comforts; when as, indeed, there is no ſound comfort without having our hearts in a perfect communion with Chriſt, walking with God, and breaking off from our evil courſes.—What is the reaſon of diſcomforts, unreſolvedneſs, and unſettledneſs? when we know not where we are, whither we go, or what our condition is; unſettledneſs breeds diſcomfort, and indeed there is no pleaſure ſo much as the pleaſure that the ſerving of God hath with it. As the fire hath light and heat always in it, ſo there is no holy action that we perform thoroughly, but as it hath an increaſe of ſtrength, ſo there is an increaſe of comfort and joy annexed to it. There is a preſent reward annexed to all things that are ſpiritually good; they carry with them preſent peace and joy, the conſcience hath that preſent comfort, which conſumes all diſcouragements whatſoever, as is always found in the experience of that ſoul that hath won ſo much of itſelf, as to break through diſcouragements to the practice of holy duties.—Believers have a joy and comfort that others know not of, an hidden kind of manna, and contentment.

Theſe, and a thouſand ſuch like diſcouragements men frame to themſelves. My health will not ſerve, I ſhall endanger my life. There is a lion in the way, ſaith the ſluggard, who, with his excuſes, thinks himſelf wiſer than the wiſeſt in the city. There is none ſo wiſe as the ſluggard; for belly policy teacheth him a great many excuſes, which he thinks will go for wiſdom, becauſe by them he thinks to ſleep in a whole ſkin. He is but a ſluggard for all that; and though he plead, Yet a little while, poverty, not only outward, but ſpiritual poverty and barrenneſs of ſoul will come upon him as an armed man, and leave him deſtitute of grace and comfort, when he ſhall ſee, at the laſt, what an evil courſe of life he hath led, that he hath yielded ſo much to his lazy fleſh to be drawn away by diſcouragements from duties, that he was convinced were agreeable to the word. Now what may be the grounds and cauſes of theſe falſe pretences and excuſes which hinder us from holy duties? There may be many cauſes.

Firſt of all, one cauſe of this in us is this: Naturally, ſo far as we are not guided by a better ſpirit than our own, we are inclined too much to the earthly preſent things of this life, becauſe they are preſent and pleaſant, and we are bound up in them, and whatſoever pulls us from them is unwelcome to us. This is one ground.

Again

Again, join with this, that, naturally, ſince the fall, the ſoul of man having loſt wiſdom to guide it to that which is truly good, hath wit enough left to deviſe untoward ſhifts, to excuſe that which is evil. In this fallen eſtate, the former abilities to deviſe things thoroughly good, is turned to a matter of untoward wit, joined with ſhifting. God made man upright, but he hath ſought out many inventions. Carnal wit ſerves carnal will very well, and carnal luſts never want an advocate to plead for them, namely carnal reaſon. From the bent, therefore, of the ſoul to ill things, pleaſure, eaſe, and honour, (ſuch a condition as pleaſeth the outward man ſince the fall) the bent and weight of the ſoul goeth this way, together with wit: having loſt the image of God in holy wiſdom, there is ſhifting. This is a ground, alſo, why delays are joined with ſhifts.

Again, there is another ground, that corrupt nature, (in this like the devil and ſin) which never appear in their own colours, ſets a man on this way. Who would not hate the devil, if he ſhould appear in his own likeneſs? or ſin, if it ſhould appear in its own colours? and therefore wit ſtretcheth itſelf to find out ſhifts. For, ſays the heart, unleſs there be ſome ſhifts and pretences to cover my ſhame, I ſhall be known to be what I am indeed, which I would be loth were done. I would have the ſweet, but not the ſhame of ſin; the credit of religion, but not put myſelf to the coſt which cometh with true religion, to deny myſelf. Corrupt courſes never appear in their own colours; they are like the devil for this.

And then, again, naturally there is a great deal of hypocriſy in us. We may do duties to ſatisfy conſcience, (for ſomewhat muſt be done) to hear now and then, read and come to prayer, betwixt ſleeping and waking, (yawning prayers) when we can do nothing elſe; ſomewhat muſt be done, conſcience elſe will cry out of us that we are atheiſts, and ſhall be damned; ſome ſlubbering ſervice muſt be done therefore. Yet, notwithſtanding, herein is our hypocriſy, that we cannot bring our hearts to do it as it ſhould be done to purpoſe; for though it be true that there is much imperfection in the beſt actions, the beſt performances, yet this is hypocriſy, when men do not do it as God may accept it, and as it may yield themſelves comfort. The heart draws back; duties it will and muſt do, but yet will not do them as it ſhall have comfort by them. This is inbred in the heart naturally, conſcience forceth to do ſomething, though the fleſh and corruption

tion pulls back. This is the diſpoſition of all men, till they have got the victory over their own atheiſtical hearts.

And then, again, another ground may be this, a falſe thought of God, and of Chriſt, that they will take any thing at our hands, becauſe we love ourſelves, and think that we do very well. We think that God is ſuch a one as we are; as it is, Pſ. l. 21. "Thou thoughteſt that I was like unto thee," &c. that God will be put off with any thing, and any excuſe will ſerve the turn. You have not a ſwearer, or filthy careleſs perſon, but he thinks God is merciful, and Chriſt died for ſinners, and I was provoked to it, &c. ſtill he thinks to have ſome excuſe for it, and that they will ſtand good with God. This atheiſm is in us naturally; and when we are palpably to blame in the judgement of others and ourſelves, in our ſober wits, yet we put more ignorance and careleſneſs on God than on ourſelves. Tuſh, God regards it not, it is the times, I would be better; it is the company whom I muſt yield unto, &c. They think God will accept theſe things from them.

6. But one main ground thereof is, the ſcandals that we meet withal in the world, which, indeed, is a ground, becauſe our own falſe hearts are willing to catch at any thing. You ſee (ſay they) theſe men that make profeſſion of religion, what they are, (and then the devil will thruſt ſome hypocriſy into the profeſſion of religion) and they judge all by one or two, and will be ſure to do it: therein ſtands their ingenuity; and if they can ſee any infirmity in them that are incomparably better than themſelves, Oh they are ſafe, here is warrant enough to diſlike religion and all good courſes, becauſe ſome do ſo and ſo, as if the courſe of religion were the worſe for that. Thus they wrap themſelves in thoſe excuſes, as men do their hands to defend them from pricks. This is the vile poiſon of our hearts that will be naught and yet, notwithſtanding, will ſeek reaſon to be ſo. The ſpeech is, wickedneſs never wanted pretexts; which as it is true of great wickedneſs, much more is it of that which goes in the world for drowſy lukewarm profeſſion, under which many ſink to hell before they are aware. They never want reaſon and pretexts to cover their ſin; there is a mint and forge of them in the ſoul, it can coin them ſuddenly. Thus we ſee our wits do ſerve us excellently well, to lay blocks in our own way to hinder us from heaven; we are dunces and dull to do any thing that is ſpiritually good, whereof we are incapable. But if it be to lay blocks in our own way to heaven, to quarrel with God and his ordinan-

ces, with the doctrine of ſalvation, with the inſtruments, teachers, and thoſe that lead us a better way, that our wit will ſerve for. But to take a courſe to do us good another day, to lay up comforts, in which we might end and cloſe up our days, there we are backward, and have ſhift upon ſhift. This is added for the further explication of it, becauſe of the neceſſity of the point: For, except our hearts be diſcovered to us, we ſhall never know what religion means, ſave to know ſo much as may, through the winding, turning, ſhifting, and falſehood of our own nature, bring us to hell: Wherein we are worſe enemies to ourſelves than the devil is, who could not hurt us unleſs we did betray ourſelves.—But he hath factors in us to deal for him, our own carnal wit and affection, they hold correſpondence with him, whence all the miſchief that he doth us, is by that intercourſe that our nature hath with ſatan. That is the Dalilah which betrayeth all the Samſons (found worthy chriſtians in the world) to their ſpiritual enemies. Therefore, we can never be ſufficiently inſtructed, what a vile nature we have, ſo oppoſite to religion, as far as it is ſaving. Corrupt nature doth not oppoſe it ſo far as it is ſlubbered over, but ſo far as may bring us to that ſtate we ſhould be in, we have no worſe enemies than our own hearts. Therefore, let us watch over ourſelves continually, and uſe all bleſſed means appointed of God, whereby we may eſcape out of this dangerous ſleepy diſpoſition of ſoul, which coſt the church ſo dear, as we ſhall hear (God willing) hereafter.

SERMON VIII.

CANTICLES v. 3.

I have put off my coat, how ſhall I put it on? I have waſhed my feet, how ſhall I defile them?

WE are now, by God's aſſiſtance, to ſpeak of the remedies againſt the lazy diſtempers we are prone unto in ſpiritual things, where we left off the laſt day.

Queſt.—What courſe ſhould we take then to come forth from this diſtempered lazineſs, that we may attain a ſpiritual taſte and reliſh of heavenly things, ſo as not to loath religious exerciſes, or delay and put them off with excuſes?

Anſ.—Firſt of all, reſolve not to conſult with fleſh and blood in any thing: for it always counſels us for eaſe, as Peter counſelled

led Chriſt, "Maſter, pity thyſelf." So we have a nature in us like unto Peter, Spare, favour, pity thyſelf. Like Eve and Job's wife, we have a corrupt nature that is always ſoliciting us away from God, and drawing us unto vanity. Take heed of counſelling with fleſh and blood: For if men were in a city environed round about with enemies, would they conſult with them what they ſhould do for defence of the city? were it not a mad part? And is it not a greater madneſs, when chriſtians will conſult with fleſh and blood what they ſhould do in duties of obedience, which will always put us upon terms of eaſe, the favour of men, content and the like, which if a man yield to, he ſhall never enter into heaven? Take heed, therefore, of conſulting with our enemy, ſeeing ſatan hath all the correſpondence he hath, by that enemy which we harbour in our boſom. In which caſe, the hurt he doth us by his ſophiſtry comes by ourſelves; we betray ourſelves by our carnal reaſon, whereby ſatan mingleth himſelf with our imaginations and conceits. Let us therefore beware we liſten not to the counſel of fleſh and blood, eſpecially when the matter comes to ſuffering once; for there, of all other things, fleſh and blood doth draw back. Every one hath a Peter in himſelf, that ſaith, Spare thyſelf. Thou art indiſcreet to venture thyſelf upon this and that hazard. But where the judgment is convinced of the goodneſs of the cauſe, whether it be religion or juſtice, for the firſt or for the ſecond table, that matters not; If the judgment be convinced of the thing, then conſult not with fleſh and blood, whatſoever the ſuffering be. It is not neceſſary that we ſhould live in riches, honours, pleaſures, and eſtimation with the world; but it is neceſſary we ſhould live good men and honeſt chriſtians: therefore, when fleſh and blood objecteth in this kind, conſult not with it. Firſt, becauſe it is an enemy, and therefore is to be ſuſpected and neglected. Secondly, becauſe it is ſaid, "Fleſh and blood ſhall not inherit the kingdom of heaven;" and, therefore, we ſhould practiſe that firſt leſſon in religion, heavenly wiſdom. To aid us wherein, Chriſt (knowing what an enemy we are to ourſelves in the ways of God) ſaith, "Let a man deny himſelf, and take up his croſs, and follow me." There is no following of Chriſt, conſidering that our fleſh is ſo full of cavils and excuſes, unleſs we practiſe that heavenly leſſon of Chriſt, to deny ourſelves, our whole ſelf, our wit and reaſon in the matters of God, our will and affections. Say nay to all the ſluggiſhneſs of the fleſh; ſilence all preſently, as ſoon as ever they diſcourage thee from holy ways. Conſider whence they

come, which is enough, from God's and our enemy, and the worſt enemy we have that lieth in our own boſom. And to enable us the better, mark what Paul ſaith, "We are no more debtors to the fleſh," &c. We owe nothing to it; I owe not ſuch obedience, ſuch ſubjection to the fleſh and carnal reaſon; I have renounced it long ſince. What, am I obnoxious to a man unto whom I owe no ſervice? We owe the fleſh no ſerviee or obedience, and ſhall we yield to that which we have long ſince renounced?

2. And withal, in ſpiritual courſes, let us arm ourſelves with reſolution. Firſt, conclude, Is it ſo, or not ſo? Let our judgements be convinced; for reſolution is a diſpoſition ariſing from the will immediately; but it is of the will, by found judgement convinced of the goodneſs of the thing, after which the will reſolves. Get reſolution, from ſoundneſs of conviction, that ſuch things are good, and that they are beſt for us, and beſt for us at this time, the ſooner the better, that there is an abſolute neceſſity to have them, and that they are everlaſtingly good. O theſe conſiderations will put us on amain to obtain the ſame. It is our duty, and we ſhall ſin againſt God, againſt our conſcience, againſt the ſpirit of God, and againſt others that take like liberty by our examples, if we yield to our baſe luſts and ſuggeſtions in this kind.

And to help reſolution the more, let us have before our eyes the examples of God's worthies, who (like unto David's worthies, who brake through the hoſt of the Philiſtines for water) have in all ages broken through all diſcouragements, and made conſcience more to pleaſe God, to hold communion and fellowſhip with Chriſt, than to hold any correſpondence with the world. Look to bleſſed Paul, "What do ye vexing of me and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to go to Jeruſalem, but to die for Chriſt's ſake." And look to Chriſt, how he ſhakes off Peter, "Get thee behind me ſatan," &c. Look to Moſes how he ſhook off all the ſolicitations of a court, becauſe he had an eye to the recompence of the reward. Look to Joſhua, "I and my houſe will ſerve the Lord." Let others of the world do what they will: If others will go to the devil, let them; for myſelf, I and my houſe (thoſe that I have charge of) will ſerve the Lord. This was a noble reſolution which was in good Nehemiah, "Shall ſuch a man as I flee?" What! ſhall I flee; ſhall I do this; yield to this baſe diſcouragement; ſhall I diſcourage others (like thoſe ſpies

ſpies of Canaan) by mine example? Hence it is that (Heb. xi.) in that notable chapter, that little book of martyrs, after the catalogue of thoſe worthies ſet down there, that which we are exhorted and pointed to in the beginning of the next chapter, is unto the practice of the like virtues in imitation, having before us ſuch a cloud of witneſſes, wherewith being compaſſed, the exhortation is, "Let us therefore ſhake off every thing that preſſeth down, and the ſin that hangeth ſo faſt on," &c. As the cloud was a guide to them to Canaan out of Egypt; ſo the cloud of good examples is, as it were, a light to go before us to the heavenly Canaan.

In this caſe, above all, let us look to Chriſt, who is the author and finiſher of our faith. This will make us break through diſcouragements, and reſolve indeed. What could hinder him?—His love was ſo fiery, that nothing could hinder him to come from heaven to the womb of the virgin, from thence to the croſs, and ſo to the grave, to be abaſed lower than ever any creature was. His love to us ſo carried him through all diſcouragements and diſgraces. Conſider him who endured ſuch ſpeaking againſt of ſinners. The conſideration of Chriſt's love and example will carry us through all diſcouragements whatſoever.

And further, let us be able, by ſound reaſons, to juſtify the ways of God, and to anſwer cavils, to give account of what we do, to ourſelves and others; with reaſons why we ſanctify the ſabbath, have ſuch communion with God in prayer, neglect the faſhions of the world, &c. To have reaſons ready from ſcripture, is an excellent thing, when we are able to juſtify whatſoever we do by the word, againſt all the quarrels of our own hearts and others. When we are led to do things only by the example of others, or for bye ends, then we are oft times put to it on a ſudden by temptations, being not able to juſtify what we do. Let us labour, therefore, to do things upon good grounds, and be able to juſtify all the ways of religion, as they are eaſily juſtified; for nothing in this world ſtands ſo much with reaſon, as exactneſs in the ways of God. There is ſo much reaſon for nothing in the world, as to be not only chriſtians, but exact chriſtians; as Paul ſaith to Agrippa, "Would to God you were not almoſt, but altogether as I am, ſaving theſe bonds." To make conſcience of all ways and courſes, it ſtands with the moſt reaſon of the world, ſo to juſtify religion by reaſons unanſwerable, that may ſet down corrupt nature, and ſtop the mouth of the devil himſelf. And

herein let us propound ſound and ſtrong queſtions to ourſelves often: Are thoſe things that I am moved to do, good, or are they not If they be good, why do I not do them? If they be bad, why do I do them at all? If they be good, why do I ſtick at them? How do I prove them to be good? Have always ready ſome ſcripture, or reaſon from thence, which is as good. The reaſons of the word are moſt divinely ſtrong, let them be ready againſt all objections whatſoever; as againſt ſlight oaths, think of that of Chriſt, that we muſt give an account for all idle words, how much more for atheiſtical oaths? So, againſt groſſer ſins, learn reaſon; a civil man, an heathen, would not do thus.

So alſo, when the fleſh moveth us to any backwardneſs in religious courſes, let us have ſome ſcripture ready, or reaſons deduced from it; as, from the dignity of our profeſſion, from the great hopes we have to be glorious another day. And reaſon the matter, How doth this that I am moved to, ſuit with my hopes and expectation to come? How furthers it my journey homewards? And conſider this likewiſe, that no excuſe will ſerve the turn at the day of judgement, but ſuch an one as ariſeth from an invincible infirmity, or an unremoveable impediment. Such an excuſe, taken from an invincible infirmity, may then ſerve the turn; as, when we cannot poſſibly do a thing from impediments that all the means in the world cannot remove; as a poor man cannot be liberal, &c. Excuſes alſo fetched from impoſſible impediments; as from invincible weakneſs may avail, if a man have an infirm body, that he cannot do that which another man can.—Theſe excuſes, with a gracious God, will ſerve the turn, which are not ſo much excuſes as a juſt plea; but otherwiſe our untoward excuſes will not ſerve the turn. What hindered them in the goſpel who were invited to the ſupper? Excuſes from oxen, wives, &c Was it not lawful to buy oxen? and was it not lawful for the married to take content in a wife? "Another had married a wife." Were not all theſe things lawful? Very lawful: The farm hurts not, if it hinders not, nor the wife, oxen, nor any thing; but in this caſe, when we regard theſe things more than the invitation to come to the feaſt of holy things.—Here is the malice of the devil, which brings that doleful meſſage, They ſhall never taſte of my feaſt. There is ſuch an infinite diſproportion between the good of religion, peace of conſcience, joy in the Holy Ghoſt here, and heaven and happineſs hereafter, and between any thing in this world, that to alledge any hindrance whereby we cannot keep a good conſcience, and preſerve

preſerve aſſurance of ſalvation, is moſt extreme folly and atheiſm. I believe not a better life (the diſproportion being ſo great between the ſtate of this life and a better) if I fetch excuſes from the things of this life, to keep me from religion, the fear of God, and working out my ſalvation with fear and trembling. Theſe excuſes will not ſerve the turn, not only with God at the day of judgement, but alſo our own conſciences will tell us that we are hypocrites to make ſuch or ſuch a plea. Therefore, when men become falſe, thereby to provide for wife or children, and take corrupt courſes to keep them from religion, with pretext of their callings, (leſt they ſhould loſe one day in ſeven) this employment cannot proſper, which ſlights over duties under falſe pretences.—O! they can toil for the pelf of the world; but for matters of their ſouls, they turn off all ſhamefully, as if there were not a God to judge them, a heaven to reward them, or a hell to puniſh them! Will ſuch excuſes ſerve the turn? O no, they cannot with conſcience, much leſs with God the judge, who is greater than our conſcience. This is another way to cut off theſe idle cavils, to conſider that theſe excuſes cannot ſerve the turn, neither to comfort conſcience in this world, nor to uphold us in our plea at the day of judgement. Remember that!

4. And then again, let us inure ourſelves to bear the yoke of religion from our youth, which will make it eaſy afterwards. It were an excellent thing, if thoſe who are young (in the prime of their years) would inure themſelves to the exerciſe of religion, this would make it eaſy unto them to read the word of God, to open their ſpirits unto him in prayer. It may pleaſe God hereby, (though they be negligent herein) yet they may be called to religion. But for an old man, there is much work to do to read, to get any thing into his brain, when his memory is peſtered with other things, and corrupt nature in him is armed with a world of excuſes, that might have been prevented by a timely and ſeaſonable training up in a courſe of religion. Profane young perſons know not what they do when they put off religion. Have they excuſes now, they will have many more hereafter, when ſatan and corruption will be much ſtronger. O let them bear the yoke of religion; that is, inure themſelves to the duties that become chriſtians, which may facilitate and make it eaſy and pliable, that it may not be harſh to our nature. If a man do not hear, pray and read, he can never have faith, grace, knowledge, mortification of corruption, (wherein religion ſtands); but becauſe theſe lead to duties that are hard to nature, and harſh, it is

wiſdom to inure young ones thereto betimes, that having uſed themſelves to theſe preparing duties, they may be the more fitted for the eſſential ones. That having things in the brain by reading and hearing, grace may be wrought in the heart, it being a more eaſy paſſage from the brain to the heart. When a man is converted, it is an eaſy matter to bring it from the brain unto the heart; whereas a man that hath been negligent in his youth, muſt then be inſtructed in the principles of religion. Therefore it is a miſerable caſe (though men be never ſo politic in the world) to have been negligent herein till age. It breeds a great deal of difficulty to them, ere they can come to be in ſuch a ſtate as a chriſtian ſhould be in. Remember this therefore, to do as Paul adviſeth Timothy, a young man to exerciſe himſelf in godlineſs. It is a good thing for all that are young to exerciſe themſelves to all duties of religion, or elſe pretences will grow up with age, whereby they will be indiſpoſed every day more than other — Experience ſhews it generally, we may believe it: if we will not, we ſhall find it hereafter too true by woful experience.

5. And then again, by little and little, not only to be inured to the yoke of religion, but likewiſe to endure difficulties, oppoſition and hardſhip; as the Apoſtle ſtands upon it to Timothy, "To endure hardſhip and afflictions from the beginning." If the thing be good and warrantable, neglect the ſpeeches of the world. What are the ſpeeches of a company of men in the ſtate of nature, in their miſerable condition, to regard them ſo as not to endure hardſhip in ſuch things, of the goodneſs whereof we are convinced? But in theſe days men take up a delicate profeſſion of religion, men will be religious, but they will ſuffer nothing, not a taunt or a ſcoff, they will part with nothing, be at no loſs, ſuffer no croſs, be at no pains with religion further than may ſtand with all earthly enjoyment in this world. This delicate profeſſion (if any thing among us) threateneth the removing of the goſpel and bleſſed truths we enjoy, becauſe we will not part with any thing now. How will they ſuffer afflictions for the goſpel (if ſuch times come) that will not part with a vain oath, a corrupt faſhion of life, a ſuperfluity, that will not part with a rotten unſavoury diſcourſe, which diſcovereth a rotten ſpirit, and infecteth others? Here is a profeſſion of religion indeed, that cannot have ſo much command of the corrupt heart, as to deny and overcome itſelf in things that are groſsly ill. How will a man part with his blood and life, who will not part with things that he ſhould part withal? not only with ſomething to the poor,

and

and to good uſes, but to part with ſome ſinful courſe of life, and wicked and ungodly luſts that fight againſt the ſoul, who will not endure ſo much as a check, who, rather than they will go under that cenſure wherewith the world is pleaſed to diſgrace religion, will live and die like atheiſts. This extreme tenderneſs in the matters of God and of ſalvation, is the cauſe why many eternally periſh.

6. Again, to cut off all vain excuſes, let us often have a thought in our heart what we ſhould be, and what we ſhould all aim at, and how far we come all ſhort of it. A chriſtian that hopes for good from his religion, ſhould live by faith, and depend upon God in the uſe of lawful means. If he be as he ſhould be, he ought to walk with God, keep his watch with him, and do nothing unbeſeeming the eye of God. When his corruption draws him to be careleſs, then he is not as he ſhould be; for in a right temper he ought to be fitted to every good work, ready for all opportunities of doing any thing that is good. becauſe the time of this life is the ſeed-time, the time of doing good; the time of reaping is in the world to come: when therefore the heart is ſhut, when any opportunity is offered of doing good, he may conclude certainly, I am cold and dull, pretend what I will, I am not as I ſhould be. "A chriſtian ought to abound in the work of the Lord," eſpecially having ſuch abundance of encouragements as we have. What a world of encouragements hath a chriſtian? there are none like thoſe of religion, from the inward content that it brings here at the hour of death, and in glory hereafter. When we are drawn to be ſcanty, niggardly, and baſe to things that are good, ſurely this is not as it ſhould be, pretend what we will to the contrary, this is a fault. A chriſtian ſhould at all times be fit to yield and to render up his ſoul unto God, becauſe our life is uncertain. When therefore we are moved by corruption to live in a ſtate that we cannot abide to die in, becauſe we are under the guilt of ſome ſin, then certainly, pretend what we will, our ſtate is ſo far naught, ſo far there is unfitneſs and unwillingneſs to die. Let us have an eye on our ſoul therefore, what a chriſtian ſhould be, aim at it, and think that when we ſtop at a lower meaſure and pitch, then, pretend what we will, all is but from carnal wit and policy, the greateſt enemy that religion hath.

We pray in the Lord's prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven," great deſires, and which ſhould be the deſires of all our hearts. But herein we play the hypocrites, while we pray thus, that the kingdom of God

God may come, that Chriſt may rule in our hearts over luſts and deſires; yet notwithſtanding we pretend this and that excuſe, whereby we may be led with this and that luſt, we croſs our own prayers; yet it ſheweth what pitch we ſhould aſpire to, "To ſanctify the Lord in our hearts," to delight in him, and truſt in him above all. When we do not this, we fall ſhort of our own prayers. And when we cannot bring our hearts to ſuffer, and to do what God would have us to do, but are led away with our own wills, we are not as we ſhould be; our wills ſhould be conformable to Chriſt's in all things; it is our prayer, and therefore we ſhould aim at it. Now when fleſh and blood ſets up a pitch of religion, I am well enough, and yet prays, "Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done," &c. ſuch a man is a hypocrite, for his prayer leads him further and further ſtill till he come to heaven, where is all perfection, untill when, our life is a life of endeavour and progreſs. Though we be never ſo perfect, yet Chriſt may rule and ſet up his kingdom yet more in the heart, and further bring our will to his in all things; when fleſh and blood ſets up cavils againſt this, we play the hypocrites with God, and croſs ourſelves. Therefore let us juſtify a meaſure of religion beyond our preſent pitch whatſoever it is, juſtify it more and more ſtill; think we are never as we ſhould be till we be in heaven, and never bleſs ourſelves, but think that we ſhould always be on the growing hand, and whatſoever excuſe comes to hinder us from zealouſneſs and earneſtneſs (though it carry a ſhew of reaſon in the profeſſion of religion) account it to come from our corrupt hearts.

7. Again, remember to do all things to God, and not to man, in our callings, both of religion, and in our particular callings; and then whatſoever diſcouragement there is from men, we ſhould not be diſcouraged. We ſhall hear men continually complain of others that they are unthankful perſons, and why ſhould we do any thing for them? Why? Do it to God: If it fall within our callings, let us do juſtice and ſhew mercy, God will accept, though men do not: It cuts off many diſcouragements in duties: It is beſt to have God's reward. In this world it is good to meet with naughty unthankful perſons, becauſe otherwiſe we ſhould meet with all our reward here. It is good to do ſomewhat for God's ſake, and for religion, let people be as they will; to ſay, I did it not to you, but to God. If a man regard the diſcouragement of the world, he ſhall never do that which is good, people in the world are ſo unthankful and regardleſs of thoſe that wiſh

wiſh them beſt, and that do beſt to them. But if a man do a thing to God, and do it out of duty and conſcience, he may hold on, has he never ſo many diſcouragements in the world, he ſhall loſe nothing, all ſhall be rewarded, and is regarded.

8. Likewiſe be ſure to carry this in mind, That ſin is the greateſt evil, and grace and goodneſs the beſt things in the world. Therefore there is no excuſe for ſin from any thing in the world, for it is the worſt thing in the world, which ſtains the ſoul, and hinders it from comfort. And for grace and goodneſs in the inward man, it is the beſt thing in the world, therefore purchaſe this, though with diſadvantage. It is beſt to avoid ſin, though with enduring evil; yea, to avoid the leaſt ſin by enduring the greateſt evil. It is wiſdom to do good with diſadvantage, when the diſadvantage is bounded only in this life, the thing that I do, being a thing which furthers my reckoning at the day of account. Therefore have this always in conſideration, whatſoever I ſuffer in this world, I will not ſin; this will cut off a world of excuſes.

Therefore let us labour to cut off all cavils, and to arm ourſelves. It is the Apoſtle Peter's exhortation; as David's worthies broke through the pikes to fetch him water from the well of Bethlehem; ſo all chriſtian worthies that look to be crowned, let them be armed inwardly with reſolution for good things, take up reſolutions that they will do it. As Paul tells his ſcholar Timothy of his purpoſe, "Thou knoweſt my purpoſe and manner of living;" this is the manner of a chriſtian life, that this "I will not break for all the world." So there is a purpoſe of living honeſtly, a manner of life, not by ſtarts now and then, to ſpeak a good word and to do a good deed; but there is a purpoſe and a manner of life for it; he reſolves always for the beſt things.

And to this end beg of God his ſpirit, which is above all impediments. The more ſpirit, the more ſtrength and courage againſt impediments. The more we attend upon holy means, the more ſpiritual and heavenly light and life is ſet up in the ſoul. The more ſpiritual we are, the more we ſhall tread under foot all thoſe things that ſtand between us and heaven. Let us therefore labour more and more for the ſpirit, and then we ſhall offer a holy violence unto good things, as it was ſaid of John Baptiſt's time, "The kingdom of God ſuffereth violence," men were ſo eager of it, that they ſurpriſed it like a caſtle, by violence: there is no way to take heaven but by offering violence

to

to diſcouragement, corruption, and whatſoever ſtands in the way; the violent only takes heaven by force. Now when we are ſpiritual, we ſhall not pretend that there is a lion in the way, that there are difficulties, as the ſluggard doth, that thinks himſelf wiſer than many men who can render a reaſon, but we ſhall go boldly and courageouſly on, and know that there are more encouragements for good, and ſtronger, than the world hath allurements to be naught, which are but for the preſent life; but we have inward ones which will hold out in the hour of death and after. Therefore go on boldly and reſolutely in good things, always remembering to beg the ſpirit of God, that may arm our ſpirits with invincible courage.

Now the ſpirit of God brings faith with it, which is a conquering victorious grace over the world, and ſees him that is inviſible; which brings love alſo, which is ſtrong as death, wherewith the ſoul being warmed, it conſtraineth us to do duties in ſpite of all impediments: the ſpirit of God will ſtrengthen our hope alſo of heaven, which ſtrengthens us againſt all diſcouragements which ſtand in our way, for this hope is on greater and better grounds than diſcouragements are, and he that giveth us this hope will enable us to poſſeſs it.

Therefore labour firſt to have a clear underſtanding of the things of God, and of the excellency of them, for light will cauſe heat. Why did the kingdom of heaven in John Baptiſt's time ſuffer violence? Why were men then ſo violent to cleave unto Chriſt? Becauſe from that time the goſpel was more clearly manifeſted, and heavenly truths, the more they are diſcovered and laid open (there is ſuch an excellency in them), the more they work upon the heart and affections; therefore, "The kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence." And where are people more earneſt after good things, than in theſe places where the evangelical truths of God are laid open moſt, where they break through all diſcouragements whatſoever?

And ſo, labour for faith to believe thoſe truths, which is the moſt victorious and conquering grace, that will carry us through all diſcouragements whatſoever, becauſe it will ſet greater things before us, than the diſcouragements are. Are we afraid of men? faith ſets hell before us. Are we allured by the world? it ſets heaven before us: it conquers the world, with all the diſcouraging temptations thereof: Are the diſcouragements from impoſſibilities? Oh, it is hard, I cannot do it: ay but (ſaith Paul)

"I

"I am able to do all things through Chriſt that ſtrengthens me." There is a kind of omnipotence in faith, "O woman, be it unto thee as thou wilt." We have abundance of ſtrength in Chriſt, faith is but an empty hand that goes to Chriſt to draw from him what it hath need of; "In Chriſt I can do all things."

So, to have our hearts warmed with love to him; this grace of the ſpirit will make us paſs through all diſcouragements, for it hath a conſtraining power; "The love of Chriſt conſtrains us," ſaith the Apoſtle. If our hearts once be warmed with the love of Chriſt, this will make us to think nothing too dear for Chriſt, and will cut off all excuſes and pretences whatſoever which come from coldneſs of affection. "Love is ſtrong as death," as we have it in this book, "Much water cannot quench it." All oppoſitions and diſcouragements whatſoever, all the water which the devil and the world hath or uſeth, cannot quench the heavenly fire of love when it is kindled in any meaſure. What carried the bleſſed ſaints and martyrs of God in all times through the pikes of all diſcouragements? the ſpirit of God, by the ſpirit of love, from a ſpirit of faith and heavenly conviction of the excellency and truth of the things; they ſaw ſuch a light which wrought upon their affections, and carried them amain againſt the ſtream (contrary to the ſtream of the times wherein they lived) that the worſe the times were, the better they were.

9. And let us conſider again, that Chriſt will not be always thus alluring us, that we ſhall not always have theſe encouragements, ſuch truths and monitions of God's ſpirit, as perhaps we feel now. Therefore when we feel any good motion ſtirred up towards Chriſt, entertain it preſently, perhaps we ſhall never hear of it again, the longer we defer and put it off, the worſe. As a man that is rowing in a boat, let him neglect his ſtroke, neglecting of one may make him tug at it five or ſix times after, to overtake thoſe that are before him. So nothing is gotten by ſloth and negligence, we do but caſt ourſelves back the more.

And let us help ourſelves with ſetting the glory to come before our eyes, with Moſes to have a patriarch's eye to him that is inviſible, to ſee a country afar off. Now, we are nearer ſalvation, than when we believed, let us help our backward ſouls this way; that ſo, having ſtill glory in our eyes, it may help us to go through all diſcouragements, whatſoever they be. We know Zaccheus, when he was afraid that he ſhould not ſee Chriſt, went

went before the multitude, and getting up upon the top of the tree, thus helps himself: so doth grace help itself by glory. And so far is grace from pretending hindrances, that it makes supplies in God's sevice; as David, who in this case was pleased to be accounted vile. Let us look unto the recompence of the reward, not to the present discouragements, but to the prize at the end of the race. What makes a soldier fight hard for the victory in the end? the sweetness of the triumph. What makes a husbandman go through all discouragements? he hopes to receive a crop in the end. Consider the issue which followeth after a conscionable, careful, and christian life, after a more near and perfect walking with God, and maintaining communion with him. Let there be what discouraagements there will be in the world, "The end thereof is peace, The end of that man is peace." Upon this ground, the Apostle exhorts us to be fruitful, and abundant in the work of the Lord; knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.

SERMON IX.

CANTICLES v. 6.

"*I rose to open to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself*," &c.

NATURALLY we are prone to delays in heavenly things, and then to cover all with excuses. A man is a sophister to himself, whom he first deceives, before the devil or the world deceive him, which is the reason why so oft in scripture you have this mentioned, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: Be not deceived, neither adulterer nor covetous person, nor such and such, shall ever enter into the kingdom of heaven. Be not deceived:" which is an intimation that naturally we are very prone to be deceived in points of the greatest consequence in the world, to flatter ourselves, as the church doth here, with false excuses, "I have put off my coat," &c. But we shall now see in this next verse, what becomes of all those excuses and backwardness of the church, whereby she puts off Christ.

Verse

Verſe 4.—*My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.*

Verſe 5.—*I roſe to open to my beloved, and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with ſweet ſmelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock.*

Verſe 6.—*I roſe to open to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himſelf, &c.*

This comes of her ſluggiſhneſs and drowſineſs, that Chriſt abſented and withdrew himſelf. There are three things here ſet down in theſe verſes now read.

1. Chriſt's withdrawing of himſelf.

2. His gracious dealing, having withdrawn himſelf.

He doth not altogether leave his church, but "puts his finger into the hole of the door," and then leaves ſome ſweetneſs behind him before he goes. After which is ſet down,

3. The ſucceſs of Chriſt's departure and withdrawing himſelf from her.

1. Her bowels were moved in her, which were hard before.

2. She roſe up out of her bed, wherein formerly ſhe had framed and compoſed herſelf to reſt.

3. She ſeeks and calls after him.

But the doctrinal points which are to be obſerved out of theſe verſes are theſe.

1. That Chriſt doth ſometimes uſe to leave his children, as he did the church here.

2. That the cauſe is from the church herſelf, as we ſee how unkindly ſhe had uſed Chriſt, to let him attend our leiſure ſo long; therefore he taking a holy ſtate upon him, leaves the church. The cauſe of his forſaking us is in ourſelves, we may thank ourſelves for it.

3. That though Chriſt deal thus with us, yet notwithſtanding, he never leaves us wholly, without ſome footſteps of his ſaving grace, and everlaſting love, ſome remainders and prints he leaves upon the ſoul: ſo as it lingers after him, and never reſts till it find him; he always leaves ſomething. There is never a total deſertion; as we ſee here in Chriſt's dealing, he puts his finger unto

unto the hole of the door, he ſtands at the door, and leaves myrrh behind him, ſomething in the heart that cauſeth a lingering and reſtleſs affection in her towards Chriſt.

4. That the church, by reaſon of this gracious dealing of Chriſt (leaving ſomewhat behind him) is ſenſible of her former unkindneſs, is reſtleſs, and ſtirs up herſelf to endeavour more and more, till ſhe have recovered her former communion, and ſweet fellowſhip with Chriſt, which ſhe had before She never gives over till Chriſt and ſhe meet again in peace, as we ſhall ſee in the proſecution. Theſe be the chief points conſiderable:

Firſt, Chriſt doth uſe ſometimes to leave his church, as here he doth, "my beloved had withdrawn himſelf," &c.

But what kind of leaving is it?

We muſt diſtinguiſh of Chriſt's leaving and withdrawing of himſelf: they are either in regard of outward or inward comforts and helps.

1. Outward, as Chriſt leaves his church ſometimes, by taking away the means of ſalvation, the miniſtry, or by taking away outward comforts, which is a withdrawing of his, eſpecially if he accompany the taking of them away with ſome ſigns of his diſpleaſure, or ſenſe of his anger, as uſually it falls out: this doth embitter all croſſes, namely when they come from Chriſt, as a teſtimony of his anger for our former unkindneſs.

2. Sometimes his forſaking is more inward, and this is double; either in regard of peace, and joy, ſweet inward comfort that the ſoul had wont to feel in the holy ordinances by the ſpirit of Chriſt; or, in regard of ſtrength and aſſiſtance.—There is deſertion in regard of comfort, and in regard of ſtrength. Sometimes he leaves them to themſelves in regard of ſtrength and ſupporting, to fall into ſome ſin, to cure ſome greater ſin perhaps.

Now that Chriſt thus leaves his church, it is true of all, both of the body and each particular member of the church.

1. It is true of the whole body of the church; for you have the church complaining, Iſa xlix. 14. "God hath forgotten me. Can a mother forget her child?" ſaith God again; ſo Pſal. xliv. 9. and in other places, the church complains of forſakings. The ſcripture is full of complaints of this kind.

It

It is true of the ſeveral members, and eſpecially of the moſt eminent members, as we ſee holy Job complains, as if God had ſet him, as it were, a butt to ſhoot at, and had oppoſed himſelf againſt him. So David complains, Pſal. lxxxviii. 11. Pſal. lxxvii. 9. and Pſal. lx. 1. and in other Pſalms, of God's anger; "Correct me not in thine anger." The Pſalms are full of this, ſo as it would be time unprofitably ſpent to be large in a point ſo clear, that every one knoweth well enough who reads and underſtands the Pſalms. So Jonah likewiſe felt a kind of forſaking when he was, in the midſt of the ſea, when the waves were without and terrors within; when he was in the midſt of hell as it were. Thus you ſee the inſtances clear the point.

The ends that God hath in it are many. 1. To endear his preſence the more to us, which we ſlighted too much before. It is our corruption, the not valuing of things till they be gone, we ſet not the true price upon them when we enjoy them. When we enjoy good things, we look at the grievances which are mingled with the good, and forget the good, which when it is gone, then we remember the good. The Iſraelites could remember their onions and garlick, and forget their ſlavery: ſo becauſe manna was preſent, they deſpiſed manna, and that upon one inconvenience it had, it was ordinary with them. Thus the corrupt heart of man is prone in the enjoying of favours; if it have any grievance, it murmurs at that, and it troubles and makes them forget all the goodneſs and ſweetneſs of what they enjoy. But on the contrary, when God withdraws thoſe good things from us, then we forget thoſe former inconveniences, and begin to think what good we had by them. This is the poiſon and corruption of our nature.

2. Again, Chriſt ſeems to forſake us, to try the truth of the graces and affections in us, whether they be true or not, and to cauſe us to ſeek after him when he ſeems to forſake us, as undoubtedly we ſhall, where there is truth of grace planted in the heart in any meaſure.

3. And in regard of others, he doth it to teach us heavenly wiſdom how to deal with thoſe in affliction; it makes us wiſe, tender, and ſucceſsful in dealing with others, when we have felt the like particular grievance ourſelves; as Gal. vi 1. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, you that are ſpiritual, reſtore ſuch an one to the ſpirit of meekneſs, conſidering thyſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted." Experience of ſpiritual grief in this

kind will make us fit, able, and wise every way to deal with others.

4. This serves likewise to wean us from the world, in the plenty and abundance of all earthly things; for take a christian that hath no cross in the world, let him find some estrangement of Christ from his spirit, and that he finds not the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and that enlargement which in former times he enjoyed, then all the wealth he hath, the earthly contentments he enjoys, please him not, nor can content that soul, which hath ever felt sweet communion with Christ. Again, how should we pray with earnestness of affection, "Thy kingdom come," in the time of prosperity, except there were somewhat in this kind to raise up the soul to desire to be gone? Now it is our subjection to these alterations and changes, ebbings and flowings, sometimes to have the sense of God's love in Christ, and sometimes to want it, sometimes to feel his love, and sometimes again the fruits of his anger and displeasure, which serves exceedingly to stir up men's desires to heaven.

5. In this place here, the especial end was to correct the security and ill carriage of the church.

6. And likewise, to prepare the church, by this desertion and seeming forsaking, for nearer communion, for indeed Christ did not forsake her but to her feeling, to bring her in the sequel to have nearer communion and union with himself than ever she had before; God forsakes that he may not forsake, he seems strange that he may be more friendly; this is Christ's way, he personates an adversary when he intends to shew the greatest effects of his love, as we may see afterwards in the passages following.

7. And also, to make us know thoroughly the bitterness of sin, that we may grow to a further hatred of that which deprives us of so sweet a communion; we think sin a trifle, and never know it enough till the time of temptation, that conscience be awakened and opened; then it appears in its right colouts.

8. And then again, that we may know what Christ suffered and underwent for us in the sense of God's wrath, in the absence of his favour for a time. This the human nature could never have suffered if his divinity had withdrawn itself. Now all of us must sip of that cup whereof Christ drank the dregs, having a taste what it is to have God to forsake us. For the most part those

thoſe believers who live any time, (eſpecially thoſe of great parts) God deals thus with; weaker chriſtians he is more indulgent unto; at ſuch times we know of what uſe a mediator is, and how miſerable our condition were without ſuch a one, both to have borne and overcome the wrath of God for us, which burden he could never have undergone, but had ſunk under, but for the hypoſtatical union.

Uſe 1.—Let us not therefore cenſure any chriſtian when we find that their courſe hath been good and gracious, yet notwithſtanding they ſeem to want comfort; let us not wonder at them, as if God had utterly forſaken them; indeed ſometimes they think themſelves forſaken, and the world thinks them ſo too, that God regards them not; they are people not reſpected either by God or by others, as you have the church in the Pſalms complaining, as if God had forſaken them, ſo they think themſelves forſaken, and the world thinks them ſo too; therefore in ſo doing we ſhall grieve the generation of the righteous. It was thus with the head of the church, with the whole church, and with every particular member; neither is it fit we ſhould always enjoy the preſence of God's love. Chriſt by heavenly wiſdom diſpenſeth of his ſweetneſs, comforts and peace, as may ſtand with our ſouls beſt good; and we ſhould as much take heed of cenſuring ourſelves in that condition, as if we were rejected and caſt away of God. We muſt judge ourſelves at ſuch times by faith and not by feeling, looking to the promiſes and word of God, and not to our preſent ſenſe and apprehenſion.

Uſe 2.—Again, if this be ſo, learn to prepare and look for it before hand, and to get ſome grounds of comfort, ſome promiſes out of the word, and to keep a good conſcience. O it is a heavy thing, when God ſhall ſeem to be angry with us, and our conſcience at the ſame time ſhall accuſe us, when the devil ſhall lay ſins hard to our charge, and ſome afflictions at the ſame time lie heavy upon the ſore and guilty ſoul. If we have not laid up before hand, what will become of our poor ſoul, when heaven, and earth, and hell, and all ſhall ſeem to be againſt it? There are few that come to heaven, but they know what theſe things mean. It is good therefore to look for them, and to prepare ſome comforts before hand.

But what here ſhould be the inward moving cauſe? it is in the church herſelf; for mark the connexion; ſhe had turned off Chriſt with excuſes, pretences, and dilatory anſwers, and now

preſently upon it, Chriſt forſakes her in regard of her feeling, and of the ſweet comfort ſhe formerly enjoyed. The point is, That the cauſe reſts in ourſelves, why Chriſt withdraws comfort from our ſouls.

If we ſearch our own hearts, we ſhall find it ſo; and uſually the cauſes in ourſelves are theſe, as it was in the church here. 1. When we are unkind to Chriſt, and repel the ſweet motions of the ſpirit. 2. When we improve not the precious means of ſalvation that we enjoy. 3. When we are careleſs of our converſation and company. 4. When we linger after carnal liberty and eaſe. 5. When we yield to carnal policy, and ſhifts to keep us off from the power of religion, to go on in a lukewarm courſe. 6. When we hanker after earthly things and comforts; and wrap ourſelves up in fleſhly policy for eaſe. 7. When we tremble not at God's judgements and threatnings, and at the ſigns of them, and many ſuch things. Where theſe diſpoſitions are, we need not wonder if we find not the comfort of Chriſt, and of the Holy Ghoſt in us, with the gracious preſence of his ſpirit; the cauſe is in ourſelves. But ſecurity hath been at large ſpoken of before, where the church's ſleep was handled; therefore the point ſhall not be here enlarged, but only ſome uſe of it, as may ſerve for the preſent purpoſe.

Uſe 1.—If Chriſt ſhould take away the comfort we enjoy, and remove himſelf, and his dwelling from us (for he is now among us, and knocks at our doors) do we not give him juſt cauſe to depart? what a ſpirit of ſlumber poſſeſſeth us, which will be awaked with nothing to ſeek after Chriſt? how few lay hold upon God, preſs upon him, wreſtle with him by prayer, to hide themſelves before the evil day come, as they ſhould do? therefore if Chriſt have abſented himſelf a long time from the church in general, and withdraws the comfort and preſence of his ordinances; and in particular withhold the ſweet comfort of our ſpirits, and our peace, ſo that we ſee him in the contrary ſigns of his diſpleaſure and anger, as if he did not regard and reſpect us, we have given him juſt cauſe ſo to do. We ſee here how the church uſed Chriſt, and ſo do we with the like ſecurity, and a ſpirit of ſlumber, with unkindneſs, notwithſtanding all the provocations that Chriſt uſeth to win us; he leaves us not, until he be left firſt, for he deſires to have nearer acquaintance, communion and fellowſhip with the ſoul, as we have ſeen in the former verſe, "My love, my dove, my undefiled, Open to me," &c. Therefore if we do not enjoy more acquaintance

tance with Chriſt than we do, and walk more in the comforts of the Holy Ghoſt, it is merely from our own indiſpoſition and ſecurity; therefore let us cenſure ourſelves in this kind, and not call Chriſt an enemy, as if he had forgotten, and God had forſaken. Take heed of ſuch a ſpirit of murmuring: if ſuch a ſtate befall us, let us labour to lay our hand upon our mouth, and to juſtify Chriſt. It is juſt with him thus to leave me, to give me over to this terror, to deal thus with me, that have dealt ſo unkindly with him; ſo to juſtify God, and accuſe ourſelves, is the beſt way to recover ſpiritual comfort.

3. Well, for the third point, That howſoever Chriſt be provoked by the church's ingratitude, drowſineſs, and careleſs carriage, to leave her in regard of her feeling, and of inward comfort, yet notwithſtanding he is ſo gracious, as to leave ſomething behind him, that ſhews indeed, that he had not left the church altogether, but only in ſome regard; for howſoever Chriſt, in regard of ſome order of his providence, leave it; yet in regard of another order of his providence, care and mercy, he doth not leave it, ſo that one way which he takes muſt ſometimes give place to another way of his working in ordering things. Sometimes he is preſent in a way of comfort, that is one order of his diſpenſation; and when he ſees that to be neglected, then he withdraws his comforts, and hides his gracious countenance; yet he is then preſent ſtill in another order and way, though we diſcern it not, that is, in a way of humbling the ſoul, letting it ſee its ſin: ſo here, howſoever Chriſt had withdrawn himſelf in regard of this manner of his dealing, in reſpect of comfort, that the church did not now ſee his grace and favour, yet he left behind him a ſpirit of grace, to affect her heart with grief, ſorrow, and ſhame, and to ſtir up her endeavour to ſeek after him (as it is ſaid here) "I roſe to open to my beloved, and my hands dropt myrrh, and my fingers ſweet ſmelling myrrh, upon the handles of the locks."

Here obſerve theſe three things, which ſhall be briefly named, becauſe they ſhall be touched elſewhere.

Chriſt's grace is the cauſe of our grace.

He firſt leaves myrrh, and then her fingers drop myrrh; our oil is from his oil; the head being anointed, the oil runs down to the ſkirts of Aaron's garment; out of his fulneſs we receive grace for grace, that is, our grace is anſwerable to the grace of Chriſt; we have all from him, favour for his favour, becauſe

he is beloved, we are beloved; we have the grace of ſanctification from him, he was ſanctified with the ſpirit, therefore we are ſanctified; we have the grace of privilege for his grace, he is the ſon of God, therefore we are ſons; he is the heir of heaven, therefore we are heirs; ſo that of his grace it is we receive all, whether we take grace for favour, or for the grace of ſanctification, or the grace of privilege and prerogative, all our graces are from his, our myrrh from his myrrh.

This ſhould teach us the neceſſity of dependence upon Chriſt for whatſoever we have or would have; which dependence upon Chriſt is the life of our life, the ſoul of our ſouls.

Again, obſerve from hence, that the church's fingers dropped myrrh when ſhe opened the door and ſtirred up herſelf to endeavour. When firſt her bowels were moved, then ſhe makes to the door, and then her hands dropped myrrh, ſo that we find experience of the grace of Chriſt, eſpecially when we ſtir ourſelves to endeavour; "Ariſe and be doing, and the Lord ſhall be with thee," ſaith David to Solomon, ſo let us rouſe up ourſelves to endeavour, and we ſhall find a gracious preſence of Chriſt and a bleſſed aſſiſtance of the ſpirit of Chriſt, who will ſhew himſelf in the midſt of endeavours. "To him that hath ſhall be given;" What is that? To him that hath, if he exerciſe and ſtir up the grace of God in him, ſhall be given. Therefore let us ſtir up the grace of God in us, let us fall upon actions of obedience, and ſecond them with prayer; whatſoever we pray for and deſire, ſet upon the practice thereof, we mock God elſe, except we endeavour for what we deſire. There was myrrh left on the door, but ſhe feels it not till ſhe aroſe, opened the door, and laid her hand upon the lock.

I ſpeak to any chriſtian's experience, if in the midſt of obedience they do not find the comfort they looked for, and that it is meat and drink to do God's will; therefore keep not off and ſay, I am dead and drowſy, therefore I ſhall be ſtill ſo: You are deceived, fall upon obedience and practiſing of holy duties, and in the midſt thereof thou ſhalt find the preſence and aſſiſtance of God's ſpirit which will comfort thee.

The third thing obſervable from hence is this, That God's graces are ſweet.

Pleaſant and ſweet, compared here to myrrh, which was an ingredient in the holy oil. Grace makes us ſweet, prayers are ſweet,

as

as it is, Rev. viii. 4. Chriſt mingleth them with his own ſweet odours, and ſo takes and offers them to God. Holy obedience is ſweet and delightful to God and to the conſcience, it brings peace and delight to others, therefore they are called fruits; fruit doth not only imply and ſhew the iſſuing of good things from the root, but there is alſo a pleaſantneſs in it; ſo there is a delightfulneſs in good works, as there is in fruit to the taſte; therefore if we would be ſweet and delightful to God, let us labour to have grace. If we would think of ourſelves with contentment, and have inward ſweetneſs, let us labour for the graces of God's ſpirit, theſe are like myrrh. "The wicked are an abomination unto the Lord," who abhors them, and whatſoever is in them; but "the righteous and ſincere man is his delight." Therefore if we would approve ourſelves to God, and feel that he hath delight in us, labour to be ſuch as he may delight in.

Uſe—Wherefore let the diſcouraged ſoul make this uſe of it, not to be afraid to do that which is good, for fear we ſhould ſin. Indeed ſin will cleave to what we do, but Chriſt will pardon the ſin, and accept that which is ſweet of his own ſpirit. Let us not eſteem baſely that which Chriſt eſteems highly of, nor let that be vile in our eyes that is precious in his; let us labour to bring our hearts to comfortable obedience, for it is a ſweet ſacrifice to God.

Now whence came all this? From this that is mentioned, verſe 4. "My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him." Firſt, for that expreſſion "he put his finger in by the hole of the door:" It implies here that Chriſt before he departed, left by his ſpirit an impreſſion on the church's heart, which deeply affected her to ſeek after him.

The fingers ſpoken of are nothing but the power of his ſpirit, as the uſual ſcripture phraſe is, "This is God's finger, God's mighty hand," without which all ordinances are ineffectual; "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water," but all is nothing without the working of the ſpirit, the motions whereof are moſt ſtrong, being God's finger, whereby he wrought all that affection in the church, which is here expreſſed. Chriſt before he leaveth the church, put "his finger into the hole of the door," that is, he works ſomewhat in the ſoul by his ſpirit, which ſtirred up a conſtant endeavour to ſeek after him, for why elſe,

follows it, "her bowels were moved after him," which implies a work of the ſpirit upon her bowels, expreſſed in her grief for his abſence, and ſhame for her refuſing his entrance; and whereby her heart was moved, and turned in her to ſeek after him. From whence, thus explained, obſerve, That outward means will do no good, unleſs the finger of Chriſt come to do all that is good.

The finger of Chriſt is the ſpirit of Chriſt, that is, a kind of divine power goes from him in hearing and ſpeaking the word of God, and in prayer; there is more than a man's power in all theſe; if theſe work any effect, Chriſt muſt put his finger in; when duties are unfolded to us in the miniſtry of the word, all is to no purpoſe, but the ſounding of a voice, unleſs the finger of Chriſt open the heart, and work in the ſoul.

Let us make this uſe of it therefore, not to reſt in any means whatſoever, but deſire the preſence of Chriſt's finger to move, and to work upon our hearts and ſouls. Many careleſs chriſtians go about the ordinances of God, and never regard the power of Chriſt, this mighty power, the finger of Chriſt. Thereupon they find nothing at all that is divine and ſpiritual wrought in them: for as it required a God to redeem us, and to take our nature, wherein he might reſtore us: ſo likewiſe it requires the power of God to alter our natures. We could not be brought into the ſtate of grace without divine ſatisfaction; and cannot be altered to a frame of grace without a divine finger, the finger of God working upon our hearts and ſouls. This ſhould move us in all the ordinances of God that we can attend upon, to lift up our hearts in the midſt of them. Lord, let me feel the finger of thy ſpirit writing thy word upon my heart. Turn me, O Lord, and I ſhall be turned Pray for this quickning and enlivening; for this ſtrengthening ſpirit all comes by it.

2. From this that it is ſaid here, That Chriſt puts his finger into the hole of the door before he removed it, and withdrew himſelf, obſerve how graciouſly Chriſt doth deal with us, that he doth always leave ſome grace, before he doth offer to depart. Let us therefore for the time to come, lay and ſtore this up as a ground of comfort, that however Chriſt may leave us, yet notwithſtanding he never leave us wholly, but as he gave us his holy ſpirit at firſt, ſo he will continue him in us by ſome gracious work or other, either by a way of comfort, or of ſtrength to uphold us. Perhaps we may need more ſorrow,

more

more humility than of any other grace; for winter is as good for the growing of things as the ſpring; becauſe were it not for this, where would be the killing of weeds and worms, and preparing of the ground, and land for ſpring; ſo it is as needful for chriſtians to find the preſence of Chriſt, in a way of humiliation and abaſement, cauſing us to afflict our own ſouls, as to feel his preſence, in peace and joy, and comfort. In this life we cannot be without this gracious diſpenſation. We may therefore comfort ourſelves, that howſoever Chriſt leaves us, yet he will always leave ſomewhat behind him, as here he left ſome myrrh after him upon the handle of the door; ſome myrrh is left always behind him upon the ſoul, which keeps it in a frame of grace, and ſweetens it. Myrrh was one of the ingredients in the holy oil, as it is, Exod. xxx. 30. and ſo this leaving of myrrh behind him, ſignifies the oil of grace left upon the ſoul, that enabled the church to do all theſe things, which are after ſpoken of.

Object.—But you will ſay, How doth this appear, when in ſome deſertion a Chriſtian finds no grace, ſtrength, or comfort at all? that nothing is left?

Anſ.—It is anſwered, They always do. Take thoſe who at any time have had experience of the love of God and of Chriſt formerly, take them at the worſt, you ſhall find in them ſome ſparkles of grace, broken ſpeeches of tried ſecret comfort, ſome inward ſtrength and ſtruggling againſt corruptions, their ſpirits endeavouring to recover themſelves from ſinking too low, and with ſomething withſtanding both deſpair and corruption. Take a chriſtian at the worſt, there will be a diſcovery of the ſpirit of Chriſt left in him notwithſtanding all deſertion. This is univerſally in all in ſome meaſure, though perhaps it is not diſcerned by a chriſtian himſelf, but by thoſe that are able to judge. Sometimes others can read our evidences better than ourſelves. A chriſtian that is in temptation cannot judge of his own eſtate, but others can; and ſo at the very worſt he hath always ſomewhat left in him whereby he may be comforted. Chriſt never wholly leaves his church and children that are his. Thoſe that are wholly left never had ſaving grace, as Achitophel, Cain, Saul, and Judas were left to themſelves; but for the children of God, if ever they found the power of ſanctifying grace, Chriſt whom he loves, he loves to the end: from whom he departs not, unleſs he leaves ſomewhat behind him that ſets an edge upon the deſires to ſeek after him.

Uſe

Uſe 2.—Make this ſecond uſe of it, To magnify the gracious love and mercy of Chriſt, that when we deſerve the contrary, to be left altogether, yet notwithſtanding he deals ſo graciouſly with us.

Behold in this his dealing, the mercy of Chriſt; he will not ſuffer the church to be in a ſtate of ſecurity, but will rather (to cure her) bring her to an oppoſite ſtate of grief and ſorrow, as we ſhall ſee in the next point how that which Chriſt left in the heart of the church, ſo afflicted her, that her bowels were turned in her; whereupon ſhe riſeth, ſeeks and enquires after Chriſt by the watchmen and others; ſo ſhe ſaith of herſelf,

My bowels were moved in me, &c.

What was that? My heart was affected, full of ſorrow and grief for my unkind dealing with Chriſt. Hereby thoſe affections were ſtirred that were before ſleepy and ſecure, to godly grief, ſorrow, and ſhame; for God hath planted affections in us, and joined them with conſcience, as the executioners of the judge; ſo that when conſcience accuſeth of any ſin either of omiſſion or commiſſion, affections are ready to be the executioners within us. Thus to prevent eternal damnation, God hath ſet up a throne in our own hearts to take revenge and correction by our own affections, godly ſorrow, and mournings, as here the church ſaith, "My bowels were turned in me." It was a ſhame and grief ſpringing out of love to Chriſt that had been ſo kind, patient, and full of forbearance to her. "My bowels were turned in me," that is, ſorrow and grief were upon me for my unkind dealing.

The obſervation from hence is, That ſecurity and a cold dull ſtate, produceth a contrary temper; that is, thoſe that are cold, dull, ſecure, and put off Chriſt, he ſuffers them to fall into ſharp ſorrows and griefs.

We uſually ſay, cold diſeaſes muſt have hot and ſharp remedies: It is moſt true ſpiritually, ſecurity which is a kind of lethargy, a cold diſeaſe, forgetting of God and our duty to him, muſt have a hot and ſharp cure, and the lethargy is beſt cured by a burning ague. So Chriſt deals here, he puts his finger in at the hole of the door, and leaves grace behind to work upon the bowels of the church, to make her grieve and be aſhamed for her unkind dealing. Thus he cures ſecurity by ſorrow. This is the beſt concluſion of ſin.

And

And we may obſerve withal, that even ſins of omiſſion bring grief, ſhame, and ſorrow; and in the iſſue, through Chriſt's ſanctifying them, theſe which they breed conſume the parent, that is, ſin brings forth ſorrow, ſhame and grief, which are a means to ſecure ſin. Security breeds this moving of the bowels, which moving helps ſecurity. Would we therefore prevent ſorrow, ſhame, and grief, take heed then of ſecurity, the cauſe that leads to them; yea, of ſins of omiſſion, wherein there is more danger than in ſins of commiſſion. The ſins of carnal wicked men are uſually ſins of commiſſion, moſt of which break out outrageouſly, and thereby taint themſelves with open ſins. But the ſins of God's people, who are nearer to him, are for the moſt part ſins of omiſſion, that is, negligence, coldneſs, careleſſneſs in duty, want of zeal, and of care they ſhould have in ſtirring up the graces of God in them, as the church here, which did not give way to Chriſt, nor ſhook off ſecurity.

Uſe—Let us eſteem as ſlightly as we will of ſins of omiſſion and careleſſneſs, they are enough to bring men to hell, if God be not the more merciful. It is not required only that we do no harm, and keep ourſelves from outward evils, but we muſt do good in a good manner, and have a care to be fruitful and watchful, which if we do not, this temper will bring grief, ſhame, and ſorrow afterwards; as here, even for ſins of omiſſion, deadneſs, and dulneſs, we ſee the church is left by Chriſt, and her bowels are turned in her; for careleſſneſs, neglect, and omiſſion of duty to God is a preſage and fore-runner of ſome downfall and dejection; and commonly it is true, when a man is in a ſecure and careleſs ſtate, he may read his deſtiny, though he has been never ſo good, nay, the rather, if he be good. Such a one is in danger of falling into ſome ſharp puniſhment, or into ſome ſin, for of all ſtates and tempers God will not ſuffer a chriſtian to be in a ſecure lazy dead ſtate, when he cannot perform things comfortably to God, to himſelf, or to others; a dead ſecure ſtate is ſo hateful to him (decay in our firſt love, this lukewarm temper) that he will not endure it; it either goes before ſome great ſin, croſs, affliction, or judgement.

My bowels were moved in me.

And good reaſon, it was a ſuitable correction for the ſin wherein ſhe offended, for Chriſt's bowels were turned towards her in love and pity, "My love, my dove, my undefiled," in which caſe ſhe neglecting him, it was fit ſhe ſhould find moving of bowels

bowels in another ſenſe, out of love too, but in ſhame and mourning. Chriſt here leaves her to ſeek after him, who had waited and attended her leiſure before, as we ſhall ſee after.

The next thing we may hence obſerve in that, That her bowels were turned in her from ſomething left in the hole of the door by the ſpirit of Chriſt, is, That Chriſt hath our affections in his government.

He hath our bowels in his rule and government, more than we ourſelves have. We cannot of ourſelves rule our grief, ſhame, ſorrow, or ſuch affections as theſe. The wiſeſt man in the world cannot put off grief and ſorrow when God will turn it upon his bowels, and make a man aſhamed and confounded in himſelf. All the wit and policy in the world cannot ſuppreſs thoſe affections, for Chriſt rules our hearts. "The hearts of kings are in his hand as the rivers of water," as well as the hearts of ordinary perſons.

If he ſet any thing upon the ſoul to afflict it and caſt it down, it ſhall afflict it, if it be but a conceit, if he will take away the reins from the ſoul and leave it to its own paſſion, removing away its guard, for he by his ſpirit guards our ſouls with peace by commanding tranquillity: ſo that let him but leave it to itſelf, and it will tear itſelf aſunder, as Achitophel, who being left to himſelf, did tear himſelf in pieces; Cain alſo being thus left, was diſquieted, tormented, and wracked himſelf; ſo Judas in this caſe being divided in himſelf, you ſee what became of him. Let Chriſt but leave us to our own paſſion of ſorrow, what will become of us but miſery? He hath more rule therefore of our paſſions than we ourſelves have, becauſe we cannot rule them graciouſly, nor can we ſtay them when we would.

Uſe—Therefore this ſhould ſtrike an awe in us of God, with a care to pleaſe him, for there is not the wiſeſt man in the world but if he remove his guard from his ſoul, and leave him to himſelf, if there were no devil in hell, yet he would make him his own tormentor and executioner; therefore the Apoſtle makes this ſweet promiſe, Phil. iv. 7. He bids them pray to God, and the peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding ſhould keep their ſouls, &c. ſo the word is in the original. It is a great matter for the keeping of God's people, to have their ſouls guarded.

Her

Her bowels were turned in her.

Here again, as the concluſion of all this, we ſeeing this eſtate of the church, may wonder at Chriſt's carriage towards her in this world. Chriſt is wonderful in his ſaints, and in his goodneſs towards them; ſometimes alluring them, as we ſee Chriſt the church here; wondrous in patience, notwithſtanding their provocation of him; wondrous in his deſertions; wondrous in leaving ſomething behind him in deſertions. Thoſe that are his, he will not leave without grace, whereby they ſhall ſeek him again. Nay, the falling out of lovers ſhall be the renewing of freſh and new love, more conſtant than the former was. Thus our bleſſed Saviour goes beyond us in our deſerts, taking advantage even of our ſecurity, for our greater good, making all work for good in the iſſue, which ſhall end in a more near and cloſe communion between Chriſt and his church than ever before. Carnal men feel not theſe changes, ebbings, and flowings; they are not acquainted with God's forſakings; Indeed their whole life is nothing but a forſaking of God, and God's forſaking of them, who gives them outward comforts, peace and friends in the world, wherein they ſolace themſelves; but for inward communion with him, any ſtrength to holy duties, or againſt ſin, or to be inſtruments for God's honour and ſervice, to do any good, they are careleſs, for they live here to ſerve their own turns, leaving their ſtate and inheritance behind them. The ſcripture ſaith, "They have no changes, therefore they fear not God," and ſo they go down to hell quietly and ſecurely. Oh but it is otherwiſe with God's children, they are toſſed up and down, God will not ſuffer them to proſper, or live long in a ſecure, drowſy, ſinful ſtate, the continuance wherein is a fearful evidence that ſuch a one has yet had no ſaving grace, nor that he yet belongs to God, ſeeing Chriſt hates ſuch an eſtate, and will not ſuffer his to be long therein, but will ſhift and remove them from veſſel to veſſel, from condition to condition, till he have wrought in them that diſpoſition of ſoul that they ſhall regard and love him more and more, and have nearer and nearer communion with him.

SER-

SERMON TENTH.

CANTICLES v. 6.

I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: My soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but could not find him; I called him, but he gave no answer.

THUS we see that the life of a christian is trouble upon trouble, as wave upon wave. God will not suffer us to rest in security, but one way or other he will fire us out of our lurking holes, and make us to run after him. How much better were it for us, then, to do our works chearfully and joyfully, so to run as we may obtain, than to be thus hurried up and down, and, through our own default, coming into desertions, and there receiving rebukes and blows, and delays, ere we have peace again, as it fell out with the church in the sequel? for this text is but the beginning of her seeming misery. The watchmen, after this, found her and wounded her, &c. But heaven is more worth than all, now that her affections are set on fire; from thence she bestirs herself, is resolute to find out her beloved, whom she highly values above all this world. How her affections were stirred by Christ's putting in his finger at the hole of the door, we have heard. Now follows her action thereupon; for here is rising, opening, seeking, calling and enquiring after Christ.

Action follows affection. After her bowels are moved, she ariseth and openeth. From whence we may further observe, that where truth of affection is, it will discover itself in the outward man, one way or other. If there be any affection of love and piety to God, there will be eyes lift up, knees bended down, and hands stretched forth to heaven. If there be any grief for sin, there will be the face dejected, the eyes looking down, some expression or other. If there be a desire, there will be a making forth to the thing desired; for the outward man is commanded by the inward, which hath a kind of sovereign commanding power over it, and says, Do this, and it doth it; speak this, and it speaks it. Therefore, those whose courses of life are not gracious, their affections and their hearts are not good; for where the affections are good, the actions will be suitable. Her bowels were moved in her, and presently she shews the truth of her affection, in that she maketh after him.

1. Her

1. Her ſoul failed when he ſpake. 2. She makes after him. "My ſoul failed when he ſpake, I ſought him, but I could not find him."—Of Chriſt's withdrawing himſelf we ſpake in general before, wherefore we will leave that and proceed.

My ſoul failed when he ſpake.

That is, her ſoul failed when ſhe remembered what he had ſpoke, when he ſtood at the door, and ſaid, "Open to me, my ſiſter, my love, my dove, my undefiled, for my head is wet with the dew," &c. Now when God's ſpirit had wrought upon her, then ſhe remembered what Chriſt had ſaid. All thoſe ſweet allurements were effectual now unto her, eſpecially when ſhe ſaw that after thoſe ſweet allurements Chriſt had withdrawn himſelf; for that is the meaning of theſe words, "My ſoul failed when he ſpake unto me." He did not ſpeak now, but her ſoul failed after he ſpake; (for ſo it ſhould be read) that is, after ſhe remembered his ſpeech to her; for now when ſhe opened, he was not there, therefore he could not ſpeak to her.

Obſerv.—The word of Chriſt, howſoever for the preſent it be not effectual, yet afterwards it will be in the remembrance of it. To thoſe that are gracious, it will be effectual, when the Holy Ghoſt comes to ſeal it further upon their heart. Chriſt ſpake many things to his diſciples which they forgot; but when afterwards the Holy Ghoſt, the comforter, was come, his office was, to bring all things to their remembrance that they had forgotten before. The Holy Ghoſt taught them not new things, but brought former things to their remembrance; for God will make the word effectual at one time or other. Perhaps the word we hear is not effectual for the preſent; it may afterwards, many years after, when God awakes our conſciences.

And as this is true of God's children, the ſeed now ſown in them perhaps will not grow up till many years after: ſo it is true, alſo, of thoſe that are not God's children, they think they ſhall never hear again of thoſe things they hear. Perhaps they will take care, by ſenſuality, hardening of their hearts (and thro' God's judgements withal concurring) that conſcience ſhall not awake in this world; but it ſhall awake one day; for it is put into the heart to take God's part, and to witneſs againſt us for our ſins. It ſhall have and perform its office hereafter, uſe it as you will now; and it will preach over thoſe things again that you now hear. You ſhall hear again of them, but it ſhall be a barren

barren hearing. Now we may hear fruitfully, to do us good; but, afterwards, we shall call to mind what we have heard, and it shall cut us to the heart. Dives, we know, had Moses and the prophets to instruct him, but he never heeded them in his life, until afterwards to his torment: So men never heed what they hear and read, they put off all, and lay their consciences asleep; but God will bring them afterwards to remembrance. But because it is a point especially of comfort to the church,

Use.—Labour we all to make this use of it, to be diligent and careful to hear and attend upon the ordinances of God; for howsoever what we hear is not effectual for the present, but seems as dead seed cast into the heart, yet God will give it a body after, as the apostle speaks, at one time or other. And that which we hear now, the Holy Ghost will bring it to our remembrance, when we stand in most need of it.

My soul failed when he spake.

She was in a spiritual swoon and fainting upon his withdrawing. Whence the point considerable is, that Christ doth leave his church sometimes, and bring it very low in their own apprehensions, that their hearts fail them for want of his presence: So it was with David, so with Jonah, so with the church, Lam. iii. 1. we see it at large.

The necessity of our souls and of our estates require this; as sometimes a body may be so corrupt, that it must be brought as low as possibly may be, before there can be a spring of new and good blood and spirits: so we may fall into such a state of security, that nothing will bring us to a right temper but extreme purging. And, usually, God deals thus with strong wits and parts, if they be holy. David and Solomon were men excellently qualified; yet when they tasted of the pleasures and contentments of the world too deep, answerably they had, and so, usually, others shall have such desertions as will make them smart for their sweetness, as was shewed before.

But upon what occasions doth a christian think especially that God doth leave, forsake and fail him?

First, this failing and fainting of the soul is sometimes upon an apprehension, as if God and Christ were become enemies, (as Job saith); and as having set us as a butt to shoot at. But this is not all that a gracious and pure heart sinks for.

But,

But, alſo, ſecondly, for the abſence of Chriſt's love, though it feel no anger. Even as to a loving wife, her huſband not looking lovingly upon her as he uſed to do, is enough to caſt her down, and cauſe her ſpirits to fail: So for God to look upon the ſoul (put the caſe not with an angry, yet) with a countenance withdrawn, it is ſufficient to caſt it down. For any one that hath dependence upon another, to ſee their countenance withdrawn, and not to ſhew their face as before, if there be but a ſweet diſpoſition in them, it is enough to daunt and diſmay them.

3. Nay, moreover, when they find not that former aſſiſtance in holy duties; when they find that their hearts are ſhut up, and they cannot pray as formerly, when they had the ſpirit of God more fully; and when they find that they cannot bear afflictions with wonted patience, certainly (ſay they) Chriſt hath withdrawn himſelf. This is firſt done when they hear the word of God not with that delight and profit as they were wont; when they find how they come near to God in holy communion, and yet feel not that ſweet taſte and reliſh in the ordinances of God as they were wont to do; they conclude, certainly God hath hid his face, whereupon they are caſt down, their ſpirits fail. And do not wonder that it ſhould be ſo; for it is ſo in nature. When the ſun hides itſelf many days from the world, it is an uncomfortable time, the ſpirits of the creatures lour and wither. We ſee it ſo in the body, that the animal ſpirits in the brain, (which are the cauſe of motion and ſenſe) if they be obſtructed, there follows an apoplexy and deadneſs. So it is between Chriſt and the ſoul, he is the Sun of Righteouſneſs, by whoſe beams we are all comforted and cheared, which when they are withheld, then our ſpirits decay and are diſcouraged. Summer and winter ariſe from the preſence and abſence of the ſun. What cauſeth the ſpring to be clothed with all thoſe rich ornaments? The preſence of the ſun which comes nearer them. So what makes the ſummer and winter in the ſoul, but the abſence or preſence of Chriſt?—What makes ſome vigorous beyond others, but the preſence of the ſpirit? As it is in nature, ſo it is here; the preſence of Chriſt is the cauſe of all ſpiritual life and vigour, who when he withdraws his preſence a little, the ſoul fails.

"My ſoul failed when he ſpake to me; I ſought him, but I could not find him; I called, but he gave me no anſwer." The church redoubleth her complaint, to ſhew her paſſion. A large heart hath large expreſſions. She took it to heart that Chriſt

did not ſhew himſelf in mercy; therefore ſhe never hath done: "I ſought him, but I could not find him; I called, but he gave me no anſwer."

Obſerv.—Affection makes eloquent and large expreſſions. But chiefly obſerve from this failing of the church, the difference between the true children of God and others. The child of God is caſt down when he finds not the preſence of God as he was wont, his ſpirits fail. A carnal man that never knew what this preſence meant, regards it not, can abide the want of it. He finds, indeed, a preſence of God in the creature which he thinks not of. There is a ſweetneſs in meat, drink, reſt; and a contentment in honour, preferment, and riches; and thus God is preſent always with him. But other preſence he cares not for; nay, he ſhuns all other preſence of God, labouring to avoid his ſpiritual preſence: For what is the reaſon that a carnal man ſhuns the applying of the word and the thinking of it, but becauſe it brings God near to his heart, and makes him preſent? What is the reaſon he ſhuns his own conſcience, that he is loath to hear the juſt and unanſwerable accuſations that it would charge upon him; but becauſe he cannot abide the preſence of God in his conſcience? What is the reaſon he ſhuns the ſight of holier and better men than himſelf? They preſent God to him, being his image, and call his ſins to memory, and upbraid his wicked life. Hence comes that ſatanical hatred, more than human, in carnal vile men, to thoſe that are better than themſelves; becauſe they hate all preſence of God, both in the word, miniſtry, and all God's holy ſervants. All ſuch preſence of God they hate, whereof one main reaſon is, becauſe they are malefactors, wicked rebels, and intend to be ſo. And as a malefactor cannot endure ſo much as a thought of the judge; ſo they cannot think of God otherwiſe (in that courſe they are in) than of a judge, whereupon they tremble and quake at the very thought of him, and avoid his preſence.

You know that great man Felix, Paul ſpake to; (in the Acts) when he ſpake of the judgement to come, and thoſe virtues, as temperance and righteouſneſs, which he was void of, and guilty of the contrary vices, he quaked, and could not endure to hear him ſpeak any longer. Wicked men love not to be arraigned, tormented, accuſed and condemned before their time; therefore, whatſoever preſents to them their future terrible eſtate, they cannot abide it It is an evidence of a man in a curſed condition, thus not to endure the preſence of God; but what ſhall God and Chriſt

Chriſt ſay to them at the day of judgement? It was the deſire of ſuch men not to have to do with the preſence of God here, and it is juſt with Chriſt to anſwer them there as they anſwer him now. "Depart, depart, we will have none of thy ways," ſay they. "Depart, ye curſed," ſaith he. He doth but anſwer in their own language. "Depart, ye curſed, with the devil and his angels."

But you ſee the child of God is quite of another temper; he cannot be content to be without the preſence of God and of his ſpirit, enlightening, quickening, ſtrengthening and bleſſing of him in ſpiritual reſpects. When he finds not his preſence helping him, when he finds Chriſt, his life, is abſent from him, he is preſently diſcouraged: for Chriſt is our life. Now, when a man's life fails, all fails; when, therefore, a man finds his ſpiritual taſte and comfort not as it was before, then, Oh, the life of my life hath withdrawn himſelf, and ſo is never quiet till he have recovered his life again, for Chriſt is his life.

And becauſe there is a preſence of God and of Chriſt in the word and ſacraments, a ſweet preſence; the godly ſoul droops and fails if he be kept from theſe. He will not excommunicate himſelf, as many do, that perhaps are aſleep when they ſhould be at the ordinances of God; but if he be excommunicated and baniſhed, O how takes he it to heart! Pſal. xlii. i. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, ſo longeth my ſoul after thee, O God." The whole lxxxiv. Pſalm is to that purpoſe, "O how amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hoſts!" He finds a preſence of God in his word and ſacraments, and when he doth not taſte a ſweet preſence of God therein, he droops and ſinks.

A carnal man never heeds theſe things, becauſe he finds no ſweetneſs in them; but the godly finding Chriſt in them, they droop in the want of them, and cannot live without them. "Whither ſhall we go, (ſaith Peter to Chriſt) thou haſt the words of eternal life?" I find my ſoul quickened with thy ſpeaking. So a ſoul that feels the quickening power of the ordinances, he will never be kept from the means of ſalvation, but he droops, and is never well till he have recovered himſelf again.

Again, another difference may be obſerved: Carnal men, when they find the ſenſe of God's anger, they ſeek not God's favour, but think of worſe and worſe ſtill, and ſo run from God till they be in hell. But thoſe that are God's children, when they fail,

and find the ſenſe of God's diſpleaſure, they are ſenſible of it, and give not over ſeeking to God; they run not further and further from him. The church here, though ſhe found not Chriſt preſent with her, yet ſhe ſeeks him ſtill, and never gives over.

Obſerv.—Whence again we may obſerve, that although the church be ſaid to fail, and not to find Chriſt, yet he is preſent then with her: For who enabled her to ſeek him? To explain this, there is a double preſence of Chriſt. 1. Felt. 2. Not felt.

1. The preſence felt is, when Chriſt is graciouſly preſent, and is withal pleaſed to let us know ſo much, which is a heaven upon earth. The ſoul is in paradiſe then, when ſhe feels the love of God ſhed abroad in the heart, and the favourable countenance of God ſhining upon her. Then ſhe deſpiſeth the world, the devil and all, and walks as if ſhe were half in heaven already: for ſhe finds a preſence and a manifeſtation of it, a more glorious ſtate than the world can afford.

2. But there is a preſence of Chriſt that is ſecret, when he ſeems to draw us one way, and to drive us another, that we are both driven and drawn at once; when he ſeems to put us away, and yet, notwithſtanding, draws us. When we find our ſouls go to Chriſt, there is a drawing power and preſence; but when we find him abſent, here is a driving away. As we ſee here in the church, and in the woman of Canaan, we ſee what an anſwer ſhe had from Chriſt; at firſt none, and then an uncomfortable, and, laſtly, a moſt unkind anſwer. We muſt not give the childrens bread to dogs. Chriſt ſeemed to drive her away, but, at the ſame time, he, by his ſpirit, draws her to him, and was thereby ſecretly preſent in her heart, to increaſe her faith. When Chriſt wreſtled with Jacob, though he contended with him, yet at the ſame time he gave Jacob power to overcome him, to be Iſrael, a prevailer over him: So, at the ſame time the church ſeems to fail and faint, yet, notwithſtanding, there is a ſecret and drawing power pulling her to Chriſt, whereby ſhe never gives over, but ſeeks and calls ſtill after him. It is good to obſerve this kind of Chriſt's dealing, becauſe it will keep us that we be not diſcouraged when we find him abſent. If, ſtill, there be any grace left moving us to that which is good; if we find the ſpirit of God moving us to love the word and ordinances, to call upon him by prayer, and to be more inſtant; certainly we may gather there is a hidden ſecret preſence here, that draws us to theſe things: Nay more, that the end of this ſeeming forſaking and ſtrangeneſs

is

is to draw us nearer and nearer, and, at length, to draw us into heaven to himself. God's people are gainers by all their losses, stronger by all their weaknesses, and the better for all their crosses, whatsoever they are. And you shall find that the spirit of God is more forcible in them after a strangeness, to stir them up more eagerly after Christ than before; as here the church doth, for her eagerness, constancy, and instantness grow, as Christ's withdrawing of himself groweth.

Use.—Let us therefore learn hence how to judge of ourselves, if we be in a dead lifeless state, both in regard of comfort and of holy performances; whether we be content to be so. If we be not contented, but make towards Christ more and more, it is a good sign that he hath not forsaken us, that he will come again more gloriously than ever before. As here we shall see how it was with the church; he seems strange, but it is to draw the church to discover her affection, and to make her ashamed of her former unkindness, and to take surer and hold faster than she did before. All ends in a most sweet communion. We should labour therefore, to answer Christ's dealing, by suitable apprehensions of soul, when he is thus present secretly, though he seem, in regard of some comforts and former experience of his love, to withdraw himself. It should teach us to depend upon him, and to believe, though we feel no comfort; yea, against comfort, when we feel signs of displeasure. If he can love and support me, and strengthen my soul, and shew it a presence of that which is fit for me; certainly I should answer thus with my faith, I will depend upon him, though he kill me, as Job did. Our souls should never give over seeking of Christ, praying and endeavouring, for there is true love where he seems to forsake and leave; therefore I ought in these desertions to cleave to him in life and in death.

SERMON ELEVENTH.

CANTICLES v. 6, 7.

I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: My soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer, &c.

THE pride and security of the spouse provokes the Lord, her husband, oft to bring her very low, they being incompatible

with Chriſt's reſidence. Pride is an affection contrary to his prerogative, for it ſets up ſomewhat in the ſoul higher than God the higheſt. Security is a dull temper, or rather diſtemper, that makes the ſoul neglect her watch, and rely upon ſome outward privilege. Where this ill couple is entertained, there Chriſt uſeth to withdraw himſelf, even to the failing and fainting of the ſoul. The ſpouſe is here in her fainting fit, yet ſhe ſeeks after Chriſt, ſtill ſhe gives not over: So Jonah, "I am caſt out of thy preſence, (ſays he) yet, notwithſtanding, I will look toward thy holy temple:" And David, Pſal. xxxi. 22. "I ſaid in my haſte, I am caſt out of thy ſight; yet, notwithſtanding, thou heardeſt the voice of my prayer." He ſaid it, but he ſaid it in his haſte.—God's children are ſurpriſed on a ſudden to think they are caſt away; but it is in haſte, and as ſoon as may be, they recover themſelves. "I ſaid, it is my infirmity," ſaid David, Pſal. lxxiii. It is but in a paſſion. Here, then, is the difference between the children of God and others, in deſertions; they ariſe, theſe lie ſtill and deſpair. There is life in the ſubſtance of the oak, that makes it lift up its head above ground, though it be cut down to the ſtumps. Nay we ſee further here, the church is not taken off for any diſcouragements, but her faith grows ſtronger, as the woman's of Canaan did. The reaſon whereof is, faith looks to the promiſe and to the nature of God, not to his preſent dealing. And then God, by a ſecret work of his ſpirit, (though he ſeem to be an enemy, yet, notwithſtanding) draws his children nearer and nearer to him by ſuch his dealing. All this ſtrangeneſs is but to mortify ſome former luſt, or conſume ſome former dregs of ſecurity.

I ſought him, but I could not find him.

Here one of the greateſt diſcouragements of all other is, when prayer (which is left to the church as a ſalve for all ſores) hath no anſwer. This is the complaint, but indeed an error of the church; for Chriſt did hear the church, though he ſeemed to turn his back. But how ſhall we know that God hears our prayers? Amongſt many other things this is one, when he gives us inward peace, then he hears our prayers, for ſo is the connexion, Phil. iv. 6, 7. Or. ſecondly, if we find a ſpirit to pray ſtill, a ſpirit to wait and to hold on, it is an argument that God either hath or will hear thoſe prayers. And as it is an argument that God hears our prayers, ſo is it of the preſence of Chriſt; for how could we pray, but from his inward preſence? Chriſt was now preſent,

preſent, and more preſent with the church when he ſeemed not to be found of her, than he was when ſhe was ſecure; for whence elſe comes this eagerneſs of deſire, this ſpirit of prayer, this earneſtneſs of ſeeking?

I called, but he gave no anſwer, &c.

Directions how to carry ourſelves in ſuch an eſtate. How ſhall we carry ourſelves, when it falls out that our hearts fail of what we ſeek for; when we pray without ſucceſs, and find not a preſent anſwer; or are in any ſuch like ſtate of deſertion?

1. We muſt believe againſt belief, (as it were) hope againſt hope, and truſt in God, howſoever he ſhews himſelf to us as an oppoſite. It is no matter what his preſent dealing with his church and children here is; the nature of faith is to break thro' all oppoſition, to ſee the ſun behind a cloud, nay, to ſee one contrary in another, life in death, a calm in a ſtorm, &c.

2. Labour for an abſolute dependence upon Chriſt, with a poverty of ſpirit in ourſelves. This is the end of Chriſt's withdrawing himſelf, to purge us of ſelf-confidence and pride.

3. Stir up your graces. For as nature joining with phyſic helps it to work, and carry away the malignant humours; ſo, by the remainder of the ſpirit that is in us, let us ſet all our graces to work, until we have carried away that which offends and clogs the ſoul, and not ſink under the burden; for this is a ſpecial time for the exerciſing of faith, hope, love, diligence, care, watchfulneſs, and ſuch like graces. And let us know, for our comfort, that even this conflicting condition is a good ſtate. In a ſick body, it is a ſign of life and health approaching, when the humours are ſtirred, ſo as that a man complains that the phyſic works: So, when we take to heart our preſent condition, though we fail and find not what we would, yet this will work to the ſubduing of corruption at length. It is a ſign of future victory, when we are diſcontented with our preſent ill eſtate. Grace will get the upper hand, as nature doth when the humours are diſturbed.

4. Again, when we are in ſuch a ſeeming forlorn eſtate, let us have recourſe to former experience. What is the reaſon that God vouchſafes his children, for the moſt part, in the beginning of their converſion, (in their firſt love) experience of his love to raviſhment? It is, that afterwards they may have recourſe to that

love of God, then felt, to ſupport themſelves, and, withal, to ſtir up endeavours and hope; that finding it not ſo well with them now as formerly it had been, by comparing ſtate with ſtate, deſires may be ſtirred up to be as they were, or rather better. And as the remembrance of former experience ſerves to excite endeavour, ſo to ſtir up hope: I hope it ſhall be as it was, becauſe God is immutable; I change, but Chriſt alters not; the inferior elementary world changeth; here is fair weather and foul, but the ſun keeps his perpetual courſe; and as in the gloomieſt day that ever was, there was light enough to make it day, and to diſtinguiſh it from night, (though the ſun did not ſhine): So, in the moſt diſconſolate ſtate of a chriſtian ſoul, there is light enough in the ſoul, to ſhew that the Sun of Righteouſneſs is there, and that Chriſt hath ſhined upon the ſoul; that it is day with the ſoul, and not night.

5. And learn, when we are in this condition, to wait God's leiſure, for he hath waited ours. It is for our good, to prepare us for further bleſſings, to mortify and ſubdue our corruptions, to enlarge the capacity of the ſoul, that the Lord abſents himſelf. Therefore Bernard ſaith well, *Tibi accidit*, &c. "Chriſt comes and goes away for our good." When he withdraws the ſenſe of his love, the ſoul thereupon is ſtretched with deſire, that it may be as it was in former time, in the days of old. Thus much for that, "I ſought him, but I could not find him; I called, but he gave me no anſwer."

Object.—Here we muſt anſwer one objection before we leave the words. This ſeems to contradict other ſcriptures, which promiſe that thoſe that ſeek ſhall find. It is true, they that ſeek ſhall find, but not preſently. God's times are the beſt and fitteſt. They that ſeek ſhall find, if they ſeek conſtantly with their whole heart in all the means. Some do not find, becauſe they ſeek in one means and not in another: They ſeek Chriſt in reading, and not in the ordinance of hearing; in private meditation, but not in the communion of ſaints. We muſt go through all means to ſeek Chriſt, not one muſt be left. Thus if we will ſeek him, undoubtedly he will make good his promiſe. Nay, in ſome ſort he is found before he is ſought, for he is in our ſouls to ſtir up a deſire of ſeeking him. He prevents us with deſires, and anſwers us, in ſome ſort, before we pray; when he gives us a ſpirit of prayer, it is a pledge to us that he means to anſwer us. Therefore it is a ſpiritual deceit, when we think Chriſt is not in us,

and

and we are neglected by him, becauſe we have not all that we would have. Among many other deceits that chriſtians deceive themſelves with in this kind, theſe be two.

1. That they judge grace by the quantity, and not by the value and price of it; whereas the leaſt meaſure of grace and comfort is to be eſteemed, becauſe it is an immortal ſeed caſt into the ſoul by an immortal God, the Father of eternity.

2. Another deceit is, That we judge of ourſelves by feeling, and not by faith.

The watchmen that went about the city found me and ſmote me, and took away my veil from me.

Here the poor church, after ſetting down of her own exerciſe in her deſertion, now ſets out ſome outward ill dealing ſhe met with, and that from thoſe that ſhould have been her greateſt comforters. "The watchmen that went about the city found me, they wounded me, the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me."

Thus we ſee how trouble follows trouble, one depth calls upon another, inward deſertion and outward affliction go many times together. The troubles of the church many times are like Job's meſſengers, they come faſt one upon another, becauſe God means to perfect the work of grace in their hearts, all this is for their good. The ſharper the winter, the better the ſpring. Learn hence firſt of all therefore in general, that it is no eaſy thing to be a ſound chriſtian.

We ſee here, when the church had betrothed herſelf to Chriſt, and entertained him in her garden, thereafter ſhe falls into a ſtate of ſecurity and ſleep, whence Chriſt labours to rouſe her up; then ſhe uſeth him unkindly, after which he withdraws himſelf even ſo far that her heart fails her; then, as if this were not enough, the watchmen that ſhould have looked to her, ſmite her, wound her, and take away her veil. See here the variety of the uſage of the church, and changes of a chriſtian, not long in one ſtate, he is ebbing and flowing.

Therefore let none diſtaſte the way of godlineſs for this, that it is ſuch a ſtate as is ſubject to change and variety, whereas carnal men are upon their lees, and find no changes.

Object.—But you will ſay, All chriſtians are not thus toſſed up and down, ſo deſerted of God, and perſecuted of others.

Anſ.

Anſ.—I anſwer, Indeed there is a difference. Whence comes that difference? from God's liberty; it is a myſtery of the ſanctuary which no man in the world can give a reaſon for, why of chriſtians both equally beloved of God, ſome ſhould have a fairer paſſage to heaven, others rougher and more rugged; it is a myſtery hid in God's breaſt. It is ſufficient for us if God will bring us any way to heaven, as the bleſſed Apoſtle ſaith, "If by any means I might attain to the reſurrection of the dead," either through thick or thin, if God will bring me to heaven, it is no matter; "If I by any means."

The watchmen that went about the city ſmote me, &c.

By the watchmen here are meant eſpecially governors of ſtate and church.

Why are they called watchmen?

It is a borrowed ſpeech taken from the cuſtom of cities that are beſieged; for policy's ſake they have watchmen to deſcry the danger they are liable unto: ſo magiſtrates are watchmen of the ſtate, miniſters are the watchmen for ſouls, watching over our ſouls for good.

Queſt.—Why doth God uſe watchmen?

Anſ.—Not for any defect of power in him, but for demonſtration of his goodneſs; for he is the great watchman, who watcheth over our commonwealths, churches, and perſons; he hath an eye that never ſleeps, "He that watcheth Iſrael neither ſlumbers nor ſleeps;" yet notwithſtanding he hath ſubordinate watchmen, not for defect of power, but for demonſtration of goodneſs; he manifeſts his goodneſs in that he will uſe variety of ſubordinate watchers.

And likewiſe to ſhew his power in uſing many inſtruments, and his care for us, when he keeps us together with his own ſubordinate means.

And in this that God hath ſet over us watchers (miniſters eſpecially) it implies that our ſouls are in danger; and indeed there is nothing in the world ſo beſet as the ſoul of a poor chriſtian. Who hath ſo many and ſo bad enemies as a chriſtian? and amongſt them all, the worſt and greateſt enemy he hath is neareſt to him and converſeth daily with him, even himſelf; therefore there muſt needs be watchmen to diſcover the deceits of ſatan and his inſtruments, and of our own hearts, to diſcover the

dangers

dangers of Jeruſalem, and the errors and ſins of the times wherein we live. The church is in danger, for God hath ſet watchmen; now God and nature do nothing in vain or needleſsly.

Again, in that God takes ſuch care for the ſoul, it ſhews the wondrous worth of it. Many arguments there be to ſhew that the ſoul is a precious thing, it was breathed by God at firſt, Chriſt gave his life to redeem it; but this is an eſpecial one, that God hath ordained and eſtabliſhed a miniſtry and watchmen over it. And as God hath ſet ſome men watchmen over others, ſo hath he appointed every man a watchman over himſelf, he hath given every man a city to watch over, that is, his own ſtate and ſoul; therefore let us not depend altogether on the watching of others. God hath planted a conſcience in every one of us, and uſeth as others to our good: ſo our own care, wiſdom, and foreſight, theſe he elevateth and ſanctifieth.

The watchmen that went about the city found me, they ſmote me, they wounded me, &c.

We come now to the carriage of theſe watchmen; thoſe that ſhould have been defenſive prove moſt offenſive.

They ſmote the church and wounded her many ways, (though it be not diſcovered here in particular) as with their ill and ſcandalous life, and ſometimes with corrupt doctrine, and other-times with bitter words and their unjuſt cenſures, as we ſee in the ſtory of the church, eſpecially the Romiſh church, they have excommunicated churches and princes; but not to ſpeak of thoſe ſynagogues of ſatan, come we nearer home, and we may ſee amongſt ourſelves ſometimes thoſe that are watchmen, and ſhould be for encouragement, ſmite and wound the church, and take away her veil.

What is it to take away the veil?

You know in the times of the Old Teſtament a veil was that which covered women for modeſty, to ſhew their ſubjection; and it was likewiſe an honourable ornament. They took away the veil, that is, that wherewith the church was covered, they took away that which made the church comely, and laid her open, and as it were naked.

Now both theſe ways, the church's veil is taken away by falſe and naughty watchmen.

1. As

1. As the veil is a token of ſubjection, when by their falſe doctrines they labour to draw people from Chriſt, and their ſubjection to him.

The church is Chriſt's ſpouſe, the veil was a token of ſubjection: Now they that draw the people to themſelves, as in popiſh churches, that deſire to ſit high in the conſciences of people, and ſo make the church undutiful, take away the veil of ſubjection, and force Chriſt to puniſh the church, as we ſee in the former ages.

2. As the veil is for honour and comelineſs, ſo they take away the veil of the church, when they take away the credit and eſteem of the church, when they lay open the infirmities and weakneſſes of the church. This is ſtrange, that the watchmen ſhould do this, yet notwithſtanding oftentimes it falls out ſo, that thoſe who by place are watchmen, are the bittereſt enemies of the church. Who were bitterer enemies of the poor church in Chriſt's time than the ſcribes, phariſees and prieſts?

And ſo in the time of the prophets, who were the greateſt enemies the church had, but falſe prieſts and prophets?

Queſt.—What is the ground of this, that thoſe men that by their ſtanding ſhould be encouragers, are rather dampers of the church's zeal in purſuit of it?

Anſ.—There are many grounds of it.

Sometimes it falls out from a ſpirit of envy in them, at the graces of God's people which are wanting in themſelves; they would not have others better than themſelves.

Sometimes from idleneſs, which makes them hate all ſuch as provoke them to pains; they raiſe up the dignity of outward things too much, as much as we ſee in popery, they make every thing to confer grace, as if they had a ſpecial virtue in them; but they neglect that wherewith God hath joined an efficacy, his own ordinances.

This ſhould teach us, to be in love with Chriſt's government, and to ſee the vanity of all things here below, though they be never ſo excellent in their ordinance. Such is the poiſon of man's heart, and the malice of ſatan, that they turn the edge of the beſt things againſt the good of the church.

What is more excellent than magiſtracy, yet many times the point

point of the ſword is directed the wrong way; "I have ſaid, ye are Gods," Pſal. lxxxii. 6. They ſhould govern as God himſelf would govern; and aſk with themſelves, Would God now, if he were a watchman of the ſtate, do thus and thus? but I wiſh woful experience did not witneſs the contrary.

So miniſters are Chriſt's ambaſſadors, and ſhould carry themſelves even as Chriſt would do; they ſhould ſtrengthen the feeble knees, and bind up the broken hearted, not diſcourage, and not ſow pillows under the arm-holes of wicked and carnal men: but alas! we ſee the edge of the ordinance is oftentimes turned another way by the corrupt, proud, unbroken hearts of men, and the malice of ſatan.

Uſe 2.—Again it ſhould teach us, not to think the worſe of any for the diſgraces of the times. The watchmen here take away the veil of the church, and her forwardneſs is diſgraced by them: take heed therefore we entertain not raſh thoughts of others, upon the entertainment they find abroad in the world, or of thoſe that have a ſtanding in the church; for ſo we ſhall condemn Chriſt himſelf; how was he judged of the prieſts, ſcribes, and phariſees in his time? and this has been the lot of the church in all ages, the true members thereof were called heretics and ſchiſmatics, the veil was taken off. It is the poiſonful pride of man's heart, that when it cannot raiſe itſelf by its own worth, it will endeavour to raiſe itſelf by the ruin of others credit through lying ſlanders. The devil was firſt a ſlanderer and liar, and then a murderer; he cannot murder without he ſlander firſt; the credit of the church muſt firſt be taken away, and then ſhe is wounded, otherwiſe as it is a uſual proverb, Thoſe that kill a dog make the world believe he was mad firſt: ſo they always firſt traduced the church to the world, and then perſecuted her. Truth hath always a ſcratched face. Falſehood many times goes under better habits than its own, which God ſuffers to exerciſe our ſkill and wiſdom, that we might not depend upon the raſh judgment of others, but conſider what ground they have; not what men do or whom they oppoſe, but from what cauſe, whether from a ſpirit of envy, idleneſs, jealouſy, and pride, or from good grounds? elſe if Chriſt himſelf were on earth again, we ſhould condemn him, as now men do the generation of the juſt, whom they ſmite and wound, and take away their veil from them.

SER-

SERMON TWELFTH.

CANTICLES v. 7.

"*The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me,*
"*they wounded me, the keepers of the walls took away my veil*
"*from me.*"

THE watchmen (thoſe that by their place and ſtanding ſhould be ſo) ſmote the church, as Bernard complains almoſt 500 years ago. Alas! Alas! ſaith he. thoſe that do ſeek privileges in the church are the firſt in perſecuting it; and (as his faſhion is to ſpeak in a kind of rhetorick) they were not paſtors but impoſtors. There are two ordinances, without which the world cannot ſtand. 1. Magiſtracy, 2. Miniſtry.

Magiſtrates are nurſing fathers and nurſing mothers to the church.

Miniſters are watchmen by their place and ſtanding.

Now for ſhepherds to become wolves, for watchmen to become ſmiters, what a pitiful thing is it? but thus it is, the church hath been always perſecuted with theſe men under pretence of religion, which is the ſharpeſt perſecution of all the church; it is a grievous thing to ſuffer of an enemy, but worſe of a countryman, worſe than that of a friend, and worſt of all of the church. Notwithſtanding (by the way) we muſt know that the perſecuted cauſe is not always the beſt, as Auſtin was forced to ſpeak in his time againſt the Donatiſts. Sarah was a type of the true, and Hagar of the falſe church. Now Sarah corrected Hagar; therefore it follows not that the ſuffering cauſe is always the better; therefore we muſt judge of things in theſe kind of paſſages by the cauſe, and not by the outward carriage of things.

They took away my veil.

Queſt.—What ſhall we do in ſuch caſes, if we ſuffer any indignity, if the veil be taken off, that is, if our ſhame, infirmities, and weakneſſes be laid open by falſe imputations?

Anſ.—In this caſe it is the innocence of the dove that is to be laboured for, and withal the wiſdom of the ſerpent. If innocence

cence will not ſerve, labour for wiſdom, as indeed it will not do alone; the wicked would then labour for ſubtlety to diſgrace righteous perſons.

But what if that will not ſerve neither? Chriſt was wiſdom itſelf, yet he ſuffered moſt; when innocence and wiſdom will not do it, becauſe we muſt be conformable to our head, then we muſt labour for patience, knowing that one hair of our heads ſhall not fall to the ground, without the providence of the Almighty. Commend our caſe, as Chriſt did, by faith and prayer to God that judgeth.

I charge you, O Daughters of Jeruſalem, if ye ſee my beloved, that ye tell him that I am ſick of love, &c.

Here the church after her ill uſage by the watchmen, is forced to the ſociety of other chriſtians not ſo well acquainted with Chriſt as herſelf: "I charge you, O daughters of Jeruſalem, if you find my beloved, &c. tell him," &c. What ſhall they tell him?

Tell him I am ſick of love.

The church is reſtleſs in her deſire and purſuit after Chriſt till ſhe find him, no oppoſition you ſee can take off her endeavour.

1. Chriſt ſeems to leave her inwardly.

2. Then ſhe goeth to the watchmen, they ſmite and wound her.

3. Then ſhe hath recourſe to the daughters of Jeruſalem for help.

Generally, before we come to the particulars, from the connexion we may obſerve this, That love is a fire kindled from heaven.

Nothing in the world will quench this grace, nay, oppoſition rather whets and kindles endeavour.

The church was nothing diſcouraged by the ill uſage of the watchmen, only ſhe complains ſhe is not inſenſible. A chriſtian may without ſin be ſenſible of indignities, only it muſt be the mourning of doves, and not the roaring of bears. It muſt not be murmuring and impatience; but a humble complaining to God, that he may take our caſe to heart, as the church doth here: but ſenſible as ſhe was, ſhe was not a whit diſcouraged, but ſeeks after Chriſt ſtill in other means; if ſhe find him not

in

in one, ſhe will try in another: we ſee here the nature of love, if it be in any meaſure perfect, it caſteth out all fear of diſcouragement.

And indeed it is the nature of true grace to grow up with difficulties; as the ark roſe higher and higher with the waters, ſo likewiſe the ſoul grows higher and higher, it mounts up as diſcouragements and oppoſitions grow; nay, the ſoul takes vigour and ſtrength from diſcouragements, as the wind encreaſeth the flame: ſo the grace of God, the more the winds and waves of affliction oppoſe it, with ſo much the more violence it breaks through all oppoſition, until it attain the deſired hope.

To apply it. Thoſe therefore that are ſoon diſcouraged, that pull in their horns preſently, it is a ſign they are very cold, and have but little grace, for where there is any ſtrength of holy affection they will not be diſcouraged, nor their zeal be quenched and damped, therefore they ſubordinate religion to their own ends, as your temporary believers. Where is any love to Chriſt? the love of Chriſt is of a violent nature, it ſways in the heart as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, "The love of Chriſt conſtraineth us."

If we find this inconquerable reſolution in ourſelves, notwithſtanding all diſcouragements, to go on in a good cauſe, let us acknowledge that fire to be from heaven, let us not loſe ſuch an argument of the ſtate of grace, as ſuffering of afflictions with joy. The more we ſuffer, the more we ſhould rejoice if the cauſe be good, as the Apoſtles (Acts v. 41.) rejoiced "that they were accounted worthy to ſuffer any thing."

I charge you, O daughters of Jeruſalem, if you find my beloved, that ye tell him I am ſick of love.

She goes to the daughters of Jeruſalem for help; whence we may learn, that if we find not comfort in one means, we muſt have recourſe to another.

If we find not Chriſt preſent in one, ſeek him in another, and perhaps we ſhall find him where we leaſt thought of him; ſometimes there is more comfort in the ſociety of poor chriſtians than of the watchmen themſelves.

I charge you, O Daughters of Jeruſalem, &c.

Where we have 1. a charge given; 2. the parties charged, the daughters of Jeruſalem; 3. the particular thing they are charged

charged with, that is, if they ſee Chriſt, to tell him ſhe is ſick of love.

The parties charged, are the daughters of Jeruſalem, the daughters of the church which is called Jeruſalem, from ſome reſemblances between Jeruſalem and the church; ſome few ſhall be touched, to give light to the point.

Jeruſalem was a city compact in itſelf, as the Pſalmiſt ſaith; ſo is the church, the body of Chriſt.

Jeruſalem was choſen from all places of the world to be the ſeat of God: ſo the church is the ſeat of Chriſt; he dwells there in the hearts of his children.

It is ſaid of Jeruſalem, they went up to Jeruſalem, and down to Egypt, and other places: ſo the church is from above, "The way of wiſdom is on high." Religion is upward, grace, glory, and comfort come from above, and draw our minds up to have our converſation and our deſires above.

Jeruſalem was the joy of the whole earth: ſo the church of God, what were the world without it, but a company of incarnate devils?

In Jeruſalem records were kept of the names of all the citizens there; ſo all the true citizens of the church, their names are written in the book of life in heaven.

The daughters of Jeruſalem therefore are the true members of the church that are both bred and fed in the church. Let us take a trial of ourſelves, whether we be daughters of Jeruſalem or not. That we may make this trial of ourſelves, let us ſee,

1. If we find freedom in our conſcience from terrors and fears. If we find ſpiritual liberty and freedom to ſerve God, it is a ſign that we are daughters of Jeruſalem; becauſe Jeruſalem was free.

2. Or, if we mind things above, and things of the church, if we take to heart the cauſe of the truth, it is a ſign we are true daughters of Jeruſalem. We know what the Pſalmiſt ſaith, "Let my right hand forget her cunning, if I forget thee, O Jeruſalem; if I do not prefer Jeruſalem before my chief joy." If the cauſe of the church go to our hearts, if we can joy in the church's joy, and mourn in the church's abaſement and ſuffering, it is a ſign we are true daughters of Jeruſalem, and lively members of

the body of Chriſt, otherwiſe when we hear that the church goes down, and that the adverſe part prevails, and we joy, it is a ſign we are daughters of Babylon, and not of Jeruſalem.

Therefore let us aſk our affections, what we are? as Auſtin writes excellently in his book, De Civitate Dei, Aſk thy heart of what city thou art?

But what ſaith the church to the daughters of Jeruſalem? In the firſt place,

I charge you.

It is a kind of admiration ſupplied thus: I charge you, as you love me, your ſiſter, as you love Chriſt, as you tender my caſe that am thus uſed, as you will make it good that you are daughters of Jeruſalem and not of Babylon, tell my beloved that I am ſick of love. It is a ſtrong charge, a defective ſpeech, which yields us this obſervation, that true affections are ſerious in the things of God and of religion. She lays a weight upon them, "I charge you, O daughters of Jeruſalem." True impreſſions have ſtrong expreſſions; therefore if we be cold in matters of religion in our diſcourſe, it is becauſe we want theſe inward impreſſions. The church here was full, ſhe could not contain herſelf in regard of the largeneſs of her affections. "I charge you, O daughters of Jeruſalem," &c.

We may find the truth of grace in the heart by the diſcoveries and expreſſions in the converſation in general. "I charge you, O daughters of Jeruſalem, if you find my beloved, that ye tell him I am ſick of love." The church here ſpeaks to others meaner than herſelf, ſhe would have the church tell Chriſt (by prayer, the ſureſt intelligencer) how ſhe was uſed, how ſhe languiſhed and was ſick for him, and cannot be without him.

Queſt.—Why did not the church tell Chriſt herſelf?

Anſ.—So ſhe did as well as ſhe could, but ſhe deſired the help of the church this way alſo. Sometimes it is ſo with the children of God, that they cannot pray ſo well as they ſhould, and as they would do, becauſe the waters of the ſoul are ſo troubled, that they can do nothing but utter groans and ſighs, eſpecially in a ſtate of deſertion; as Hezekiah could but chatter, and Moſes could not utter a word at the Red Sea, though he did ſtrive in his ſpirit: in ſuch caſes they muſt be beholden to the help of others. Sometimes a man is ſick in body. James ſaith, "If any

any man be ſick, let him ſend for the elders, and let them pray." There may be ſuch diſtemper of body and ſoul, that we are unfit to lay open our eſtate to our own content. It is oft ſo with the beſt of God's children; not that God doth not reſpect thoſe broken ſighs and deſires, but they give not content to the ſoul. The poor palſied man in the goſpel not being able to go himſelf, was carried on the ſhoulders of others, and let through the houſe to Chriſt. Oft times we may be in ſuch a palſied eſtate, that we cannot bring ourſelves to Chriſt, but we muſt be content to be borne to him by others.

"I charge you, O daughters of Jeruſalem, that ye tell my beloved, I am ſick of love." Whence the point that I deſire you would obſerve is, that at ſuch times as we find not our ſpirits enlarged from any cauſe, outward or inward, to comfort and joy, then is a time to deſire the prayers and help of others. It is good to have a ſtock going every where, and thoſe thrive the beſt that have moſt prayers made for them, and have a ſtock going in every country; this is the happineſs of the ſaints. To enforce this inſtruction, to deſire the prayers of others, we muſt conſider that there is a wondrous force in the prayers of chriſtians one for another. It is more than a compliment; would it were thought ſo! The great apoſtle Paul, ſee how he deſires the Romans, that they would ſtrive and contend with God after a holy violence, by their joint prayers for him: So he deſires the Theſſalonians that they would pray for him, that he might be delivered from unreaſonable men. It is uſual with him to ſay, Pray, pray, and for us too, for ſuch are gracious in the court of heaven. Deſpiſe none in this caſe; a true downright experienced chriſtian's prayers are of much eſteem with God. Our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, when he was to go into the garden, though his poor diſciples were ſleepy and very untoward, yet he would have their ſociety and prayers.

"I charge you, O daughters of Jeruſalem, if you find my beloved, that ye tell him I am ſick of love." To ſpeak a little of the matter of the charge, "I am ſick of love." I love him, becauſe I have found former comfort, ſtrength, and ſweetneſs from him, that I cannot be without him. To be love-ſick, then, in the preſence of the church, is to have ſtrong affections to Chriſt, from which comes wondrous diſquietneſs of ſpirit in his abſence. Here is ſomewhat good and ſomewhat ill. This is firſt her virtue, that ſhe did fervently love; this was her infirmity, that ſhe

was ſo much diſtempered with her preſent want. Theſe two breed this ſickneſs of love; whence we obſerve, where the thing loved is not preſent, anſwerable to the deſires of the ſoul that loves, there follows diſquiet and diſtemper of affections; that is here termed ſickneſs of love. The reaſon hereof is, natural contentment is in union with the thing loved. The more excellent the thing is that is loved, the more contentment there is in communion with it; and where it is in any degree or meaſure hindered, there is diſquiet. Anſwerable to the contentment in enjoying, is the grief, ſorrow, and ſickneſs in parting. The happineſs of the church conſiſting in ſociety with Chriſt, therefore it is her miſery and ſickneſs to be deprived of him, not to enjoy him whom her ſoul ſo dearly loveth. There are few in the world ſick of this diſeaſe; I would there were more ſick of the love of Chriſt. There are many that ſurfeit rather of fulneſs, who think we have too much of this manna, of this preaching, of this goſpel, there is too much of this knowledge, of the ordinances;—theſe are not ſick of love.

Uſe.—Make a uſe, therefore of trial, whether we be in the ſtate of the church or no, by valuing and prizing the preſence of Chriſt in his ordinances, the word and ſacraments. There are many found ſickneſſes in the world: There is Ammon's ſickneſs, that was ſick of love for his ſiſter Thamar; his countenance diſcovered it; and Ahab, he is ſick in deſiring his neighbour's vineyard. You have many ſtrange ſickneſſes; many ſick with fires kindled from the fleſh, from hell, but few ſick of the ſickneſs here ſpoken of.

1. If we find ourſelves carried to Chriſt, to run in that ſtream as ſtrong as the affections of thoſe that are diſtempered with ſickneſs of the love of other things, it will diſcover to us whether we be truly love-ſick or not.

2. Take a man that is ſick for any earthly thing, whether of Ahab's or Ammon's ſickneſs, or of any thing, take it as you will, that which the ſoul is ſick of in love, it thinks of daily, it dreams of it in the night. What do our ſouls, therefore, think of? what do our meditations run after? When we are in our adviſed and beſt thoughts, what do we moſt think of? If of Chriſt, of the ſtate of the church here, of grace and glory, all is well. What makes us, in the midſt of all worldly diſcontentments, to think all dung and droſs in compariſon of Chriſt, but this ſickneſs of love to Chriſt? If our love be in ſuch a degree as it makes us ſick

ſick of it, it makes us not to hear what we hear, not to ſee what we ſee, not to regard what is preſent. The ſoul is in a kind of extaſy, it is carried ſo ſtrongly, and taken up with things of heaven. It is deadened to other things, when our eyes are no more led with vanity than if we had none, and the fleſh is ſo mortified, as if we were dead men, by reaſon of the ſtrength of our affections, that run another way to better things, which are above.

3. Thus we ſee it is in love. Talk with a man that is in any heat of affection, you talk with one that is not at home, you talk with one abſent; the ſoul is more where it loves than where it dwells. Surely where the love is in any ſtrength, it draws up the ſoul; ſo that a man oft times in his calling and ordinary employments doth not heed them, but paſſeth through the world as a man at random; he regards not the things of the world, for Chriſt is gotten into his heart, and draws all the affections to himſelf. Where the affection of love is ſtrong, it cares not what it ſuffers for the party loved, nay it glories in it. As it is ſaid of the diſciples, when they were whipped and ſcourged for preaching the goſpel, it was a matter of glory to them. It is not labour, but favour; it is not labour and vexation, but favour that is taken, where love is to the party loved. Where the love of Chriſt is, (which was here in the church) labour is no labour, ſuffering is no ſuffering, trouble is no trouble.

4. Again, it is the property of the party that is ſick of this diſeaſe, to take little contentment in other things. Tell a covetous worldling that is in love with the world, a diſcourſe of learning, what cares he for learning? Tell him of a good bargain, of a matter of gain, and he will hearken to that. So it is with the ſoul that hath felt the love of Chriſt ſhed abroad in the heart: tell him of the world, (eſpecially if we want that which he deſires, the peace and ſtrength that he found from Chriſt in former times) he reliſheth not your diſcourſe.

Labour we therefore every day more and more to have larger and larger affections to Chriſt. The ſoul that loves Chriſt, the nearer to Chriſt the more joyful it is, when he thinks of thoſe mutual embracings, when Chriſt and his ſoul ſhall meet together. This happineſs is there, where the ſoul enjoys the thing loved, but that is not here but in heaven: Therefore, in the mean time, with joy he thankfully frequents the places where Chriſt is preſent in the word and ſacraments, and that he may come to have this affection.

Let us see what our souls are without him, mere dungeons of darkness and confusion, nothing coming from us that is good; this will breed love to the ordinances, and then we shall relish Christ both in the word and sacrament; for he is food for the hungry soul, and requires nothing of us but good appetites; and this will make us desire his love and presence.

SERMON THIRTEENTH.

CANTICLES v. 8, 9.

I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell him I am sick of love.
What is thy Beloved more than another Beloved, O thou fairest among women? &c.

THE soul, as it is of an immortal substance, so, in the right and true temper thereof, aspireth towards immortality, unless when it is clouded and overpressed with that which presseth downwards, and the sin which hangeth so fast on, (as the apostle speaks) which is the reason of those many and divers tossings and turmoilings of the enlightened soul, now up, now down, now running amain homewards, and now again sluggish, idle, and lazy, until roused up by extraordinary means, it puts on again.—As the fire mounteth upwards unto its proper place, and as the needle still trembleth till it stand at the north; so the soul, once inflamed with a heavenly fire, and acquainted with her first original, cannot be at rest until it find itself in that comfortable way which certainly leads homewards. An instance whereof we have in the church here, who having lost her sweet communion with Christ, and so paid dearly for her former neglect and slighting his kind invitations; (as being troubled, restless in mind, beaten and wounded by the watchmen, bereft of her vail, &c.) yet this heavenly fire of the blessed spirit, this water of life so restlessly springing in her, makes her sickness of love and ardent desire after Christ to be such, that she cannot contain herself, but breaks forth into this passionate charge and requeft, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him I am sick of love."

Thus we may see that the way to heaven is full of changes, the

the ſtrength of corruption overclouds many times, and damps our joys. How many ſeveral tempers hath the church been in?— Sometimes ſhe is all compounded of joy, vehemently deſiring kiſſes of her beſt beloved; ſhe holds her beloved faſt, and will not let him go; and ſometimes again ſhe is gone, hath loſt her beloved, is in a ſea of troubles, ſeeks and cannot find him, becomes ſluggiſh, negligent, overtaken with ſelf-love; after which, when ſhe hath ſmarted for her omiſſions, (as here again) ſhe is all a-fire after Chriſt, (as we ſay) no ground will hold her, away ſhe flies after him, and is reſtleſs until ſhe find him. Where by the way we ſee, that permanency and ſtability is for the life to come. Here our portion is to expect changes, ſtorms and tempeſts; therefore they muſt not be ſtrange to particular perſons, ſince it is the portion of the whole church, which thus, by ſufferings and conformity to the head, muſt enter into glory; while God makes his power perfect in our weakneſs, overcomes ſatan by unlikely means, and ſo gets himſelf the glory, even out of our greateſt infirmities, temptations and abaſements.

But God, though he make all things work for good unto his children, even the devil, ſin and death, deſertions, afflictions and all; yet we muſt be warned hereby not to tempt God, by neglecting the means appointed for our comfortable paſſage; but open to Chriſt when he knocks, embrace him joyfully in his ordinances, and let our hearts fly open unto him: For though (through his mercy) our wounds be cured; yet who would be wounded to try ſuch dangerous experiments as here befel the church in her deſertions, for her ſluggiſh negligence, deadneſs, and ſelf-love?— So that we ſee there is nothing gotten by favouring ourſelves in carnal liberty, ſecurity, or by yielding to the fleſh. The church ſtood upon terms with Chriſt when he would have come in to her; but what enſued hereupon? She fell into a grievous deſertion, and not only ſo, but finds very hard uſage abroad, all which ſhe might have prevented by watchfulneſs, careſulneſs, and opening to Chriſt's knocking. It is a ſpiritual error to which we are all prone, to think that much is gained by favouring ourſelves, but we ſhall find it otherwiſe. See here again, that God will bear with nothing, though in his own; but he will ſharply puniſh them even for omiſſions, and that not only with deſertion, but ſometimes they ſhall meet with oppoſition in the world.

David cannot eſcape with a proud thought in numbering of the people, but he muſt ſmart for it, and his people alſo. God

is wondrous careful of his children to correct them, when he lets ſtrangers alone. It is a ſign of love when he is at this coſt with us. And it ſhould tie us to be careful of our behaviour, not to preſume upon God's indulgence; for the nearer we are to him, the more careful he is over us, he will be ſanctified in all that come near him. We ſee the Corinthians, becauſe they came unreverently to the Lord's table, (though otherwiſe they were holy men) ſome of them are ſick, ſome weak, others ſleep, that they might not be condemned with the world.

Let none, therefore, think the profeſſion of religion to imply an immunity, but rather a ſtraiter bond; for judgement begins at the houſe of God Whatſoever he ſuffers abroad, he will not ſuffer diſorders in his own houſe; as the prophet ſays, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore you ſhall not go unpuniſhed," Amos iii. 2. The church is near him, his ſpouſe whom he loveth, and therefore he will correct her, not enduring any abatement or decay of the firſt love in her.—And for this very cauſe he threateneth the church of Epheſus, to remove her candleſtick.

To proceed: the poor church here is not diſcouraged, but diſcovers and empties herſelf to the daughters of Jeruſalem. As it is the nature of all fire not only to mount upwards, but, alſo, to bewray itſelf by light and heat; ſo of this heavenly fire, when it is once kindled from above, not only to aſpire in its motion, but to diſcover itſelf in affecting others with its qualities.—It could not contain itſelf here in the church, but that ſhe muſt go to the daughters of Jeruſalem; "I charge you, O daughters of Jeruſalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him I am ſick of love." Therefore they may doubt that they have not this heavenly fire kindled in them, that expreſs it not ſeriouſly; for of all affections it will not be concealed. David wonders at his own love, "O how I love thy law! O how amiable are thy tabernacles!"

Again we ſee here, that where the ſoul is ſick of love, it ſtands not upon any terms, but it humbleth and abaſeth itſelf. We ſay that affection ſtands not with majeſty; therefore Chriſt's love to us moved him to abaſe himſelf, in taking our nature, that he might be one with us; love ſtood not upon terms of greatneſs. We ſee the church goes to thoſe that were meaner proficients in religion than herſelf, to pour out her ſpirit to them, to the daughters of Jeruſalem. She abaſeth herſelf to any ſervice. Love endureth

dureth all things, any thing, to attain to the thing loved. As we ſee Hamor, the ſon of Sechem, he would endure painful circumciſion for the love he bore to Dinah. So Acts v. 41. it is ſaid they went away rejoicing after they were whipped, becauſe they loved Chriſt. The ſpirit of love made them rejoice when they were moſt diſgracefully uſed. Sometimes where this affection of heavenly love is prevalent, ſo that a man is ſick of it, the diſtemper thereof redounds to the body, and reflects upon that: as we ſee in David, Pſal. xxxii. 4. that his moiſture became as the drought of ſummer; becauſe there is a marriage and ſympathy between the ſoul and body, wherein the exceſſive affections of the one redound and reflect upon the other. "Tell him that I am ſick of love." Here is a ſickneſs, but not unto death, but unto life; a ſickneſs that never ends but in comfort and ſatisfaction. Bleſſed are thoſe that hunger and thirſt after Chriſt, they ſhall be ſatisfied, as we ſhall ſee afterwards more at large.

Knowledge gives not the denomination; for we may know ill, and be good; and we may know good, and be evil: but it is the affection of the ſoul, which cleaves to the things known; the truth of our love is what gives the denomination of a ſtate to be good or ill. Love is the weight and wing of the ſoul, which carries it where it goes; which if it carry us to earth, we are baſe and earthy; if to heaven, heavenly. We ſhould have eſpecial care how we fix this affection; for thereafter as it is, even ſo is our condition. Aſk thy love of what city thou art, whether of Jeruſalem or of Babylon, (as Auſtin ſaith.)

Now the daughters of Jeruſalem reply unto the church, wondering at her earneſtneſs. "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou faireſt among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou doſt ſo charge us?"—Inſtead of giving ſatisfaction to her, they reply with aſking new queſtions, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou faireſt among women; what is thy beloved?" &c. Wherein ye have a doubling of the queſtion, to ſhew the ſeriouſneſs of it.

Of this their anſwer there are two parts:—1. A loving and ſweet compellation, "O thou faireſt among women."—2. The queſtion doubled, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" And again, "What is thy beloved, &c. that thou doſt ſo charge us?" As if they ſhould ſay, Thou layeſt a ſerious charge upon us, therefore there is ſome great matter ſurely in thy beloved, that thou makeſt ſuch enquiry after him? Thus the weak-

er

er chriſtians, being ſtirred up by the example of the ſtronger, they make this queſtion, and are thus inquiſitive. But to ſpeak of them in their order.

" O thou faireſt among women." Here is the compellation. The church is the faireſt among women in the judgement of Chriſt; ſo he calls her, Cant. i. 8. " O thou faireſt among women." And here the fellow members of the church term her ſo too; fair and the faireſt, incomparably fair.

Queſt.—But how cometh ſhe to be thus fair?

Anſ.—1. It is in regard that ſhe is cloathed with Chriſt's robes. There is a woman mentioned cloathed with the ſun, Rev. xii. We were all ennobled with the image of God at the firſt; but after we had ſinned, we were bereft of that image: therefore now all our beauty muſt be cloathing, which is not natural to man but artificial, fetched from other things. Our beauty now is borrowed, it is not connatural with us. The beauty of the church now comes from the head of the church, Chriſt; ſhe ſhines in the beams of her huſband, not only in juſtification, but in ſanctification alſo.

2. The church is lovely and fair again, as from Chriſt's imputed righteouſneſs, ſo from his righteouſneſs inherent in her, the graces ſhe hath from him; for of him we receive grace for grace. There is never a grace but it is beautiful and fair; for what is grace but the beams of Chriſt the Sun of Righteouſneſs? So that all muſt be fair that comes from the firſt fair, all beautiful that comes from the firſt beauty.

This beauty of grace, whereby it makes the church ſo fair, ſprings from theſe grounds:

Firſt, in that it is from a divine principle and original, it is not baſely bred, but from heaven, and therefore it raiſeth the ſoul above nature, and makes the ſubjects wherein it is as far ſurpaſs all other men as men do beaſts.

Secondly, in regard of the continuance, it is everlaſting, and makes us continue for ever. " All fleſh is graſs, and as the flower of graſs," ſaith the prophet; and it is repeated in the New Teſtament in divers places. All worldly excellency is as the flower of graſs; " The graſs withereth, and the flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord (that is, the grace that is imprinted in the ſoul by the ſpirit with the word) that abideth for ever," and makes us abide likewiſe.

Uſe

Uſe.—From this fairneſs of the church, let us take occaſion to contemplate the excellency of Chriſt, that puts this luſtre of beauty upon the church. Moſes married a woman that was not beautiful, but could not alter the complexion and condition of his ſpouſe: But Chriſt doth, he takes us wallowing in our blood, deformed and defiled; he is ſuch a huſband as can put his church into his own diſpoſition, and transform her into his own proportion. He is ſuch a head as can quicken his members, ſuch a root as inſtills life into all his branches, ſuch a foundation as makes us living ſtones; there is virtue and power in this huſband above all.

Object.—But ſhe is black.

Anſ.—1. She is ſo indeed, and ſhe confeſſeth herſelf to be ſo, Cant. i. 5. "I am black, but comely;" black in regard of the afflictions and perſecutions of others ſhe meets with in the world.

2. Black again, in regard of the ſcandals, for the devil hates the church more than all the ſocieties in the world; therefore in the ſociety of the church there are often more ſcandals than in other people. As the apoſtle tells the Corinthians, there was inceſt among them, the like was not among the heathen.

3. She is black through the envy of the world, that looks more at the church's faults than virtues. The church is black and unlovely, nothing differing from others. In regard of God's outward dealing, all falls alike to all; they are ſick and deformed, they have all things outwardly whatſoever is common with others.

4. Laſtly and principally ſhe is black, in reſpect of her infirmities and weakneſs, ſubject to weakneſs and paſſions as other men. The beauty of the church is inward, and undiſcerned to the carnal eye altogether. The Scribes and Phariſees ſaw no virtue in Chriſt himſelf. It is ſaid, that he came among his own, and his own could not diſcern him; the darkneſs could not comprehend that light. Now as it was with Chriſt, ſo it is much more with the church: Let this then be the uſe of it:

Uſe.—Oppoſe this ſtate of the church to the falſe judgment of the world. They ſee all black, and nothing elſe that is good: Chriſt ſees that which is black too, but then his ſpirit in them (together with the ſight of their blackneſs) ſeeth their beauty too. "I am black, but comely," &c. Be not diſcouraged, therefore, at the cenſure of the world; blind men cannot judge of colours.

It

It is ſaid of Chriſt, he had no form or beauty in him when we ſhall ſee him. Not in outward glory, nor in the view of the world. If we be therefore thought to be black, we are no otherwiſe thought of than the church and Chriſt hath been before us. Again, let us make this uſe of it againſt ſatan in the time of temptation: Doth Chriſt think us fair for the good we have? doth he not altogether value us by our ill? and ſhall we believe ſatan, who joins with the diſtempers of melancholy or weakneſs we are in, which he uſeth as a weapon againſt the ſoul, to make us think otherwiſe? Satan is not only a murderer, but a liar from the beginning. We muſt not believe an enemy and a liar withal. But conſider how Chriſt and the church judgeth, that have better diſcerning, and let us beware we be not ſatans to ourſelves: For if there were no devil, yet in the time of temptation and deſertion we are ſubject to diſcouragement, to give falſe witneſs againſt ourſelves, we are apt to look on the dark ſide of the cloud. The cloud that went before the Iſraelites had a double aſpect, one dark, the other light. In temptation we look on the dark ſide of the ſoul, and are ready to plead againſt ourſelves. O but conſider what Chriſt judgeth of us, "O thou faireſt among women;" and what thoſe about us that are learned, who can read our evidences better than we ourſelves, do judge of us: let us truſt the judgement of others in time of temptation more than our own. Learn again here, what to judge of the ſpirits of ſuch men as are for diſgracing and defacing the poor church. Their table talk is of the infirmities of chriſtians, they light upon them as flies do upon ſore places, and will ſee nothing that is good in them. O where is the ſpirit of Chriſt, or of the church of Chriſt in them that thus ſcratch the face of the church? when yet (oft times) their hearts tell them theſe poor deſpiſed ones will be better than themſelves one day; for grace ſhall have the upper hand of all excellencies.

The church is fair and faireſt, grace is a tranſcendent good, all the excellency of civility and morality is nothing to this; this denominates the church the faireſt, ſhe is not gilt, but pure gold, not painted, but hath a true natural complexion; all other excellencies are but gilded painted excellencies. The whore of Babylon, ſhe is wondrous fair. But wherein doth her beauty conſiſt? In ornaments and ceremonies to abuſe ſilly people that go no further than fancy; it is an excellency that comes not to the judgement. But the excellency of the church is otherwiſe; ſhe is the faireſt among women, ſhe hath a natural fairneſs: as gold

is

is pure gold, ſo the church is of a pure compoſition, glorious within. It is for the falſe whoriſh church to be glorious without only, but the true church is glorious within. But that which we ſhould eſpecially obſerve is, that we ſhould labour to anſwer this commendation, not only to be fair, but the faireſt, to be tranſcendently ſingularly good, to do ſomewhat more than others can, to have ſomewhat more in us than others have: for it is anſwerable to the ſtate of a chriſtian. Is a chriſtian in an excellent rank above other men? Let him ſhew it by a carriage more gracious, more fruitful and plentiful in good works. There is a kind of excellency affected in other things, much more ſhould we deſire to be excellent in that which is good, that we may not be fair only, but the faireſt. This the apoſtle St. Paul excellently preſſeth on Titus his ſcholar, Tit. ii. 14. and to all of us in other places, that we ſhould be a peculiar people, zealous of good works; not only to do them, but to be zealous of them, and to go before others in them, ſtanding as ſtandard-bearers. Therefore thoſe that think they may go too far in religion, that they may be too fruitful, are not worthy the name of the ſpouſe of Chriſt, for ſhe is fair, yea the faireſt among women. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour; therefore we ſhould excel in good works, (as the apoſtle exhorts us) to labour after things that are excellent; as if he ſhould ſay, Is there any thing better than other? labour for that. You have ſome ſo far from this diſpoſition, that they cry down the excellencies of others, leſt the fairneſs of others might diſcover their blackneſs. Thus we leave the compellation, and come to the queſtion.

Queſt.—"What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" and they double it, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou ſo chargeſt us?" Queſtions are of divers natures, we ſhall not ſtand upon them. This is not a queſtion merely of ignorance, for they had ſome knowledge of Chriſt, though weak; nor was it a curious nor enſnaring queſtion, like thoſe of the Scribes and Phariſees unto Chriſt. To inſtance in that of Pilate, What is truth? when Chriſt had told him the truth, What is truth? (ſaith he) in a ſcornful profane manner, as indeed profane ſpirits cannot hear ſavory words, but they turn them off with ſcorn, What is truth? This here in the text is not ſuch, but a queſtion tending to further reſolution and ſatisfaction, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?"

Firſt of all obſerve, that theſe of the church here were ſtirred up

up by the examples of other members of the church to be inquisitive after Christ, so to be satisfied. Hence observe, that there is a wondrous force in the example of christians to stir up one another. We see here when the church was sick of love, the other part of the members began to think what is the reason the church is so earnest to seek after Christ, there is some excellency sure in him; for wise men do not use great motions in little matters, great things are carried with great movings; we use not to stir up tragedies for trifles, to make mountains of mole hills; the endeavours and carriages of great persons that are wise, judicious, and holy, are answerable to the nature of things. And indeed the church judgeth aright in this. Then see the force of good example: Any man that hath his wits about him, when he sees others serious, earnest and careful about a thing whereof for the present he can see no reason, (especially if they have parts equal or superior to himself) will reason thus presently: What is the matter that such an one is so earnest, so careful, watchful, laborious, inquisitive? Is it not for want of wit? Surely he hath parts enough, he understands himself well. And then he begins to think, Surely I am too cold; hereupon comes competition and rivalship, Surely I will be as good as he.

Use.—Let us labour, therefore, to be exemplary to others, and to express the graces of God; for thus we shall do more than we are aware. There is a secret influence in good example, though a man say nothing, (saith one); there is a way to profit from a good man though he hold his peace, his course of life speaks loud enough; we owe this to all, even to them that are without, to do them so much good as to give them a good example, and we wrong them when we do it not, and hinder their coming on by an evil, or a dead example. Let this be one motive to stir us up to it, that answerable to the good we shall do in this kind, shall be our comfort in life and death, and our reward after death.—For the more spreading our good is, either in word, life, or conversation, the more our consciences shall be settled in the consideration of a good life well spent, our reward shall be answerable to our communication and diffusion of good; and whereas otherwise it will lie heavy on the conscience, not only in this life, but at the day of judgement and after, when we shall think not only of the personal ill that we stand guilty of, but exemplary ill also. It should move those, therefore, of inferior sort to look to all good examples, as the church here to the love of the other part of the church. Wherefore are examples among us, but that we should follow

follow them? We ſhall not only be anſwerable for abuſe of knowledge, but alſo of good examples we have had and neglected. Doth God kindle lights for us, and ſhall not we walk by their light? It is a ſin not to conſider the ſun, the moon, the ſtars, the heavens, and works of nature and providence; much more not to conſider the works of grace. But one place of ſcripture ſhall cloſe up all, which is Rom. xi. 11. that the example of us, Gentiles, at length ſhall ſtir up and provoke the Jews to believe. To thoſe ſtiff-necked Jews, example ſhall be ſo forcible, that it ſhall prevail with them to believe and to be converted. If example be of ſuch force as to convert the Jews that are ſo far off, how much more is it or ſhould it be to convert chriſtians? Wondrous is the force of good example. So we come to the queſtion itſelf.

What is thy beloved more than another beloved? &c.

We ſee there is excellent uſe of holy conference; the church coming to the daughters of Jeruſalem, ſpeaking of Chriſt her beloved, that ſhe is ſick of love, &c. the daughters of Jeruſalem are inquiſitive to know Chriſt more and more. Here is the benefit of holy conference and good ſpeeches, one thing draws on another, and that draws on another, till at length the ſoul be warmed and kindled with the conſideration and meditation of heavenly things. So what is little in the beginning may bring forth great matters. This queſtion to the church, and talking with her, "I charge you, if you find my beloved, to tell him that I am ſick of love," breeds queſtions in others, "What is thy beloved," &c. whence upon the deſcription of her beloved, her heart is kindled, ſhe findeth her beloved, ſo that talking of holy and heavenly things is good for others and ourſelves alſo; it is good for others, as it was good for the daughters of Jeruſalem here, for thereupon they are ſtirred up to be inquiſitive after Chriſt, and it was good for the church herſelf, for hereupon ſhe took occaſion to make a large commendation of Chriſt, wherein ſhe found much comfort.

Good conference then is good for ourſelves; for we ſee a little ſeed brings forth at length a great tree, a little fire kindleth much fuel, and great things many times riſe out of ſmall deſpiſed beginnings. It was a little occaſion which Naaman the Aſſyrian had to effect his converſion. There was a poor baniſhed woman, a ſtranger, who was a Jewiſh maid-ſervant, ſhe told her lord's ſervants that there was a prophet in Jewry that could heal him, where-

whereupon he came thither, and was converted and healed. And Paul ſheweth that the very report of his bonds did a great deal of good in Cæſar's houſe. Report and fame is a little matter, but little matters make way for the greater.

This may put us in mind to ſpend our time fruitfully in good conference, wherein diſcretion is ſeaſonable: we know not when we begin, where we may make an end, our ſouls may be carried up to heaven before we are aware, for the ſpirit will enlarge itſelf from one thing to another. "To him that hath ſhall be given more and more ſtill." God graciouſly ſeconds good beginnings; we ſee the poor diſciples, when they were grieved for the loſs of Chriſt, after he comes, meets them, and talks of holy things; in that very conference their hearts were warmed and kindled, for next to heaven itſelf, our meeting together here is a kind of paradiſe, the greateſt pleaſure in the world is to meet with thoſe here whom we ſhall ever live with in heaven. Thoſe who are good ſhould not ſpend ſuch opportunities fruitleſsly.

And to this end, labour for the graces of the communion of ſaints, for there is ſuch a ſtate, we believe it as an article of our creed. How ſhall we approve ourſelves to be ſuch as have intereſt in the communion of ſaints, unleſs we have ſpirits able to communicate good to others, pitiful and loving ſpirits that we may ſpeak a word in due ſeaſon?

What a world of precious time is ſpent in idle converſing, as if the time were a burden, and no improvement to be made of the good parts of others; ſometimes though we know that which we aſk of others as well as they do, yet notwitſtanding good ſpeeches will draw us to know it better by giving occaſion to ſpeak more of it, wherewith the ſpirit works more effectually, and imprints it deeper, ſo that it ſhall be a more rooted knowledge than before. For that doth good that is graciouſly known, and that is graciouſly known which the ſpirit ſeals upon our ſouls. Perhaps the knowledge I have is not yet ſealed ſufficiently, it is not rooted by conference; though I hear the ſame things again, yet I may hear them in a freſh manner, and ſo I may have it ſealed deeper than before: experience finds theſe things to be true.

Again, we ſhould labour here to have our hearts inquiſitive. The heathen man accounted it a grace in his ſcholar, and a ſign that he would prove hopeful, becauſe he was full of queſtions. Chriſtians ſhould be inquiſitive of the ways of righteouſneſs, inquiſitive

quiſitive of the right path which leads to heaven, how to carry themſelves in private in their families, how in all eſtates, inquiſitive of the excellency of Chriſt, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Queſtions end uſually in reſolutions, for the ſoul will not reſt but in ſatisfaction. Reſt is the happineſs of the ſoul as it were; when a queſtion is moved, it will not be quiet till it have ſatisfaction; therefore doubting at the firſt breeds reſolution at the laſt. It is good therefore to raiſe queſtions of the practice of all neceſſary points, and to improve the good parts and gifts of others that we converſe with, to give us ſatisfaction. What an excellent improvement is this of communion and company, when nothing troubles our ſpirit, but we have ſatisfaction from others upon our propoſing it! Perhaps God hath laid up, in the parts of others, ſatisfaction to our ſouls, and hath ſo determined that we ſhall be perplexed and vexed with ſcruples till we have recourſe to ſome whom he hath appointed to be helpful to us in this kind. Many go mourning a great part of their days in a kind of ſullenneſs this way, becauſe that they do not open their ſtate to others. You ſee here the contrary practice of the church, ſhe doubles the queſtion, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou faireſt among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou doſt ſo charge us?

SERMON FOURTEENTH.

CANTICLES v. 9. 10.

"*What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou faireſt a-*
"*mong women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved,*
"*that thou doſt ſo charge us?*"

"*My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefeſt among ten thouſand.*"

THE laſt time we met, we left the church ſick of love, which ſtrange affection in her, together with her paſſionate charge to the daughters of Jeruſalem, moved them to make this queſtion unto her, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved," &c. To be in love is much; to conceal it is grievous;

ous; to vent it with such fervency and passion breeds astonishment in these younger christians, who wonder what that is which can draw away the church's love, and run away with her affections. They know no such excellencies of the person the church so admired, and therefore they double the question unto her, "What is thy beloved," &c. "What is thy beloved," &c. whereby we see the excellency of the soul, which aspires still towards perfection, not resting in any state inferior to the most excellent. Therefore also is the church's sickness of love here, who desires a nearer union and communion with Christ than she at this time had.

For there are degrees of spiritual languishing: till we be in heaven we are always under some degree of this sickness of love; though the soul have more communion at one time than at another. Yea, the angels are under this wish, to see Christ together with his church in full perfection, so that until we be in heaven, where shall be a perfect re-union of soul and body, and of all the members of the church together, there is a kind of sickness attending upon the church, and a languishing.

The question asked is, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women?"

What! now fair, when her veil was taken away? now fair, when the watchmen abused her? now fair, when she was disgraced? Yes, now fair and now fair, in the sight of the daughters of Jerusalem, and in the sight of Christ, who calls her the fairest among women; so that under all disgraces, infirmities, and scandals, under all the shame that riseth in the soul upon sin, under all these clouds, there is an excellency in the church, she is the fairest among women, notwithstanding all these. "O thou fairest among women."

Quest.—Whence comes this fairness under such seeming foulness and disgrace?

Ans.—It comes from without, it is borrowed beauty, as you have it, Ezek. xvi. 1, 2. By nature we lie in our blood, there must be a beauty put upon us, we are fair with the beauty that we have out of Christ's wardrobe. The church shines in the beams of Christ's righteousness; she is not born thus fair, but new born fairer. The church of Christ is all-glorious, but it is within, not seen of the world; she hath a life, but it is a hidden life, our glory and our life is hidden in Christ, it is hid sometimes

times from the church herſelf, who ſees only her deformity and not her beauty; her death, but not her life, becauſe her life is hid. Here is a myſtery of religion: the church is never more fair than when ſhe judgeth herſelf to be moſt deformed; never more happy than when ſhe judgeth herſelf to be miſerable; never more ſtrong than when ſhe feels herſelf to be weak; never more righteous than when ſhe feels herſelf to be moſt burdened with the guilt of her own ſins, becauſe the ſenſe of one extreme forceth to another, the ſenſe of ill forceth us to the fountain of good, to have ſupply thence; "When I am weak, then I am ſtrong," ſaith St Paul; grace and ſtrength is perfect in weakneſs.

Uſe—This ſhould teach us what to judge of the church and people of God, even under their ſeeming diſgraces, yet to judge of them as the moſt excellent in the world, Pſal. xvi. "All my delight is in thoſe that are excellent," to join ourſelves to them, eſpecially this is here to be underſtood of the church as it is the myſtical body of Chriſt, not as a mixed body of a viſible church, but as it is the temple of the Holy Ghoſt.

The viſible church hath terms of excellency put upon it ſometimes, but it is in regard of the better part. As gold unrefined is called gold, becauſe gold is the better part; and a heap of wheat unwinnowed is called wheat, though there be much chaff in it; the body of Chriſt itſelf hath always excellent terms given it, "O thou faireſt among women."

Thoſe that look upon the church with the eye of malice, can ſee no ſuch beauty in her, though to eſpy our faults, as the devil could in Job, to quarrel, to ſlander, they are quick ſighted enough; but we ſee here the church in the judgement of the daughters of Jeruſalem, is the faireſt among women.

The Papiſts have a painted beauty for their Catholic church, but here is no ſuch beauty. It becomes a whore to be painted, to be as fair as her hands can make her, with feigned beauty. But the church of Chriſt hath a beauty from her huſband, a real ſpiritual beauty, not diſcerned of the world.

Uſe—This ſhould be of uſe to God's children themſelves, to help them in the upbraidings of conſcience, as if they had no goodneſs in them, becauſe they have a great deal of ill. Chriſtians ſhould have a double eye, one to ſet and fix upon that which is ill in them, to humble them, and another upon that

which is ſupernaturally gracious in them, to encourage themſelves; they ſhould look upon themſelves as Chriſt looks upon them, and judge of themſelves as he judgeth of them, by the better part. He looks not ſo much what ill we have, for that ſhall be wrought out by little and little, and be aboliſhed, it is condemned already, and it ſhall be executed by little and little till it be wholly aboliſhed; but he looks upon us in regard of the better part, ſo ſhould we look upon ourſelves, though otherwhiles upon our black feet (our infirmities) when we are tempted to pride and haughtineſs; but always let the mean thoughts we conceive of ourſelves make us fly to Chriſt.

What is thy beloved more than another beloved?

Here is a queſtion, and a queſtion anſwered with a queſtion: queſtions breed knowledge, as the Greek proverb is, Doubtings breed reſolution. Whereupon the inquiſitive ſoul uſually proves the moſt learned, judicious and wiſe ſoul; therefore that great philoſopher counted it as a virtue amongſt his ſcholars that they would be inquiſitive: ſo the ſcholars of righteouſneſs are inquiſitive, "they enquire the way to Canaan, and the way to Zion, with their faces thitherwards."

It is a ſpecial part of a chriſtian's wiſdom to improve the excellency of others by queſtions, to have a bucket to draw out of the deep wells of others, as Solomon ſaith, "The heart of a wiſe man is deep waters, but a man of underſtanding can tell how to fetch thoſe waters out." There are many men of deep and excellent parts, which are loſt in the world, becauſe men know not how to improve them; therefore it is good, while we have men excellent in any kind, to make uſe of them; it is an honour to God, as well as a commodity to ourſelves. Doth God ſuffer lights to ſhine in the world, that we ſhould take no notice of them? It is wrong to ourſelves, and a diſhonour to God.

What is thy beloved more than another beloved, &c.

A further point from hence is, That if we would give encouragement to others to repair to us for any good, we ſhould labour to be ſo excellent as to adorn religion.

O thou faireſt among women, what is thy beloved, &c.

They enquire of her becauſe they have a good opinion of her:

a

a world of good might be done if there were bred a good opinion of men in others; we ſay in ſickneſs, a good opinion of the phyſician is half the cure: ſo in teaching, a good opinion of the teacher is half the learning; the daughters of Jeruſalem had a good opinion here in the queſtioning of the church, "O thou faireſt among women, what is thy beloved more than another beloved?"

Let us labour therefore to be ſuch as may bring honour and credit to religion, and make it lovely, that what we do may make others think we do what we do to great purpoſe, which is oftimes a ſpecial means and occaſion of their converſion. Though properly the cauſe of converſion be the ſpirit of God in the ordinances, yet the inducement and occaſion many times, is the obſervation of the courſe and carriage of thoſe that excel and are known to be eminent in parts and graces. Emulation adds ſpurs to the ſoul. Do they take ſuch courſes that are wiſer than I, and ſhall not I take the like courſe too? Paul ſaith, the emulation of the Gentiles ſhall be a means of the converſion of the Jews; when they ſhall ſee them embrace Chriſt, they will do ſo alſo. What ſhall we think therefore of them that live ſo as that they bring an evil report, ſcandal, and reproach upon religion? great and fearful is their wickedneſs, that by their ill converſation, like Hophni and Phineas, diſcredit the ordinances of the Lord.

Now the church thus anſwers the former queſtion touching Chriſt, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefeſt among ten thouſand." She is not afraid to ſet out her beloved's beauty, for there is no envy in ſpiritual things; it is want of wiſdom amongſt men to commend a thing that is very lovely to others, and ſo to ſet an edge upon their affections, when they cannot both ſhare; and the more one hath, the leſs another hath of all things here below: but in ſpiritual things there is no envy at the ſharing of others in what we love ourſelves, becauſe all may be loved alike. Chriſt hath grace and affection enough for all his; he hath not, as Eſau ſpeaks, but one bleſſing; No, he can make all his happy. Therefore the church ſtands not upon terms, when the daughters of Jeruſalem enquire about her beloved. I tell you freely, ſays ſhe, what my beloved is; Firſt in general the anſwer is, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefeſt among ten thouſand." then afterwards there is a ſpecification of the particulars, ſhe will not ſtand upon generals, but admires

at every parcel in the thing beloved; every thing is lovely, as we shall see in particular afterwards.

My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.

We will take that which is safe, because we will have sure footing, as near as we can, in this mystical portion of scripture.

Quest.—What is that white and ruddy? why doth the church set forth the spiritual excellencies of Christ by that which is most outwardly excellent and most beautiful?

Ans.—Because of all complexions, the mixed complexion of these two colours, white and ruddy, is the purest and the best, therefore she sets out the beauty and the spiritual excellency of Christ by this white and ruddy; beauty ariseth of the mixture of these two. First she sets out the beauty of Christ positively, and then by way of comparison, "The chiefest among ten thousand."

But what is this white and ruddy? what is beauty?

1. To the making up of beauty there is required a sound healthy constitution, so as the particulars have a due proportion, there must be a harmony of the parts, one suiting with another; for comeliness stands in oneness, when many things, as it were, are one. Uncomeliness is in diversity, when divers things are jumbled together that belong to many heads: as we say it is uncomely to have an old man's head on a young man's shoulders; but when all things are so suited that they make one agreeing exactly, there is beauty and comeliness.

2. Besides soundness of constitution and comeliness of proportion, there is a grace of colour that maketh beauty, which ariseth out of the other, so that soundness and goodness of constitution, together with the exact proportion of the variety of parts, having with it this gracefulness of colour and complexion, makes up that which we call beauty. In a word then, this carnation colour, white and ruddy, may be understood of that excellent and sweet mixture that makes such a gracefulness in Christ; in him there is wonderful purity and holiness, and yet a wonderful weakness; there is God, the great God, and a piece of earth, of flesh, in one person, a bloody, pierced, and a glorious shining body, humility and glory; justice, wonderful justice, and yet exceeding love and mercy; justice to his enemies, mercy to his children.

Christ is a most beautiful person, not as God only but as man, the

the Mediator God and man; the perſon of the Mediator is a beautiful perſon; Pſal. xlv. here is a notable deſcription of Chriſt, and of his church, "Thou art fairer than the children of men, grace is poured into thy lips," &c.

But the lovelineſs and beauty of Chriſt are eſpecially ſpiritual, in regard of the graces of his ſpirit. A deformed perſon, man or woman, of a homely complexion and conſtitution, yet notwithſtanding when we diſcern them by their converſation to be very wiſe, and of a lovely and ſweet ſpirit, very able, and withal wondrous willing to impart their abilities, being wondrous uſeful, what a world of love doth it breed, though we ſee in their outward man nothing lovely? The conſideration of what ſufficiency is in Chriſt, wiſdom, power, goodneſs, and love, that made him come from heaven to earth to take our nature upon him, to marry us and join our natures to his, that he might join us to him in ſpiritual bonds, the conſideration of his meekneſs and gentleneſs, how he never turned any back again that came to him, ſhould make us highly prize him; indeed ſome went back of themſelves, as the young man in diſcontent; Chriſt turned them not back, nay, he loved the appearance of goodneſs in the young man, and embraced him. He is of ſo ſweet a nature, that he never upbraided thoſe that followed him with their former ſins, as Peter with denial, and the like. He is of ſo gracious a nature, that he took no notice of petty infirmities in his diſciples, but tells them of the danger of thoſe ſins that might hurt them, being of ſo ſweet a nature, that "he will not quench the ſmoaking flax, nor break the bruiſed reed," his whole life being nothing but a doing of good. "He did all things well," (as the goſpel ſpeaks), excellently well.

Now the conſideration of what a gracious ſpirit is in Chriſt, muſt needs be a loadſtone of love, and make him beautiful. Therefore Bernard ſaith well, "When I think of Chriſt, I think at once of God, full of majeſty and glory, and at the ſame time of man, full of meekneſs, gentleneſs, and ſweetneſs." So let us conſider of Chriſt as of the mighty God, powerful; and withal conſider of him as a gentle and mild man, who came riding meekly on an aſs (as the ſcripture ſets him out); He was for all comers, and gave entertainment to all, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden," &c. For the moſt weak and miſerable perſon of all had the ſweeteſt entertainment of him, he came to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt.

Let us, I ſay, think of him both as of the great God, and withal as of a meek man; the one to eſtabliſh our ſouls, that he is able to do great matters; the other to draw us to him, becauſe he loves us. We are afraid to go to God, a conſuming fire, but now let us think we go to bone of our bone, and fleſh of our fleſh, to our brother, to one that out of his goodneſs abaſed himſelf on purpoſe that we might be one with him, who loved us more than his own life, and was contented to carry the curſe for us, that we might be bleſſed of God for ever, and to ſuffer a moſt painful and ſhameful death, that ſo he might make us heirs of everlaſting life.

Chriſt is ſpiritually lovely, "the chiefeſt of ten thouſand." The church ſets him out by compariſon, a ſtandard bearer, a carrier of the banner of ten thouſand; for as the goodlieſt men uſed to carry the enſign, the banner, ſo he the goodlieſt of all others is the ſtandard bearer.

Whence we gather, That Chriſt, as he is beautiful and good, ſo is he incomparably beyond all compariſon good; he is a ſtandard bearer, one among ten thouſand, anointed with the oil of gladneſs above his fellows.

Firſt, for that he is ſo near to God by the perſonal union.

And in regard likewiſe that all others have from him; of his fulneſs we receive grace for grace, ours is but a derivative fulneſs, his glory and ſhining is as the ſhining of the body of the ſun, ours as the light of the air, which is derived from the glory of the ſun; ours is but the fulneſs of the ſtream and of the veſſel, but the fulneſs of the fountain and of the ſpring is his; thereupon he is called the head of the church; the head is the tower of the body which hath all the five ſenſes in it, and wiſdom for the whole body; it ſeeth, heareth, underſtandeth, and doth all for the body, having influence upon the other parts of it: ſo Chriſt is above all, and hath influence upon all his church, not only eminence but influence.

What is excellent in the heavens? The ſun; ſo Chriſt is the ſun of righteouſneſs: the ſtars? he is the bright morning ſtar: the light? he is the light of the world. Come to all creatures, you have not any excellent amongſt them, but Chriſt is ſtiled from it: he is the lion of the tribe of Judah, the lilly and the roſe, and the lamb of God that taketh away the ſins of the world, the tree of life, &c. There is not a thing neceſſary to nature, but

but you have a ſtile from it given to Chriſt, to ſhew that he is as neceſſary as bread and water, and the food of life. When we ſee the light thereof, think of the true light: when the ſun, think of the ſun of righteouſneſs: ſo remember the bread and water of life, in our common food; therefore the ſacraments were ordained, that as we go to the ſea by the conduct of rivers, ſo we might go to the ſea of all excellency and goodneſs, by the conduct of theſe rivers of goodneſs, to be led by every excellency in the creature, to that of our Mediator Chriſt, who is the chief-eſt among ten thouſand.

To come more particularly to ſpeak of his excellencies, omitting his two natures in one perſon, God and man; that we may conſider his offices, a king, prieſt, and prophet, he being the chief in all theſe, ſo all good kings before him were types of him, as alſo the prophets and prieſts, he was all in one. Never any before him was king, prieſt, and prophet, as he was king, prieſt, and prophet in one, ſo in every reſpect he was incomparable above all. 1. Such a king, as is king of kings, and ſubdueth things unconquerable to all other kings, even the greateſt enemies of all, ſuch a king as conquered the world, death, and hell, and ſin, all things that are terrible: death you know is called the king of fears, becauſe it terrifieth even kings themſelves. Chriſt is ſuch a king as takes away theſe terrible greateſt ills of all: ſuch a king as rules over the ſoul and conſcience, the beſt part of man, where he ſettles and eſtabliſheth peace: ſuch a king as ſits upon his kingdom in our very ſouls and hearts, guides our thoughts, deſires, actions, and affections, ſetting up a peaceable government there: ſo he is an incomparable king even in regard of that office. "He is the chiefeſt of ten thouſand," ſuch a king as carries the government upon his own ſhoulders, as it is, Iſa. ix. 6. he devolves not the care to another, to make it as he liſt, and ſo be the cypher himſelf, but he carries all upon his own ſhoulder, he needs not a Pope for his vicar.

2. Again, as a prieſt, ſuch a High-prieſt as offered himſelf a ſacrifice by his eternal ſpirit: he, as God, offered up his manhood, ſuch a prieſt as hath ſatisfied the wrath of God, and reconciled God to man. All other prieſts were but types of this prieſt, who is ſuch a prieſt as never dies, "but lives for ever to make interceſſion for us in heaven," by virtue of that ſacrifice which he offered in the days of his fleſh: He was both prieſt and ſacrifice, ſuch a prieſt as is touched with our infirmities, ſo mild

mild and gentle, full of pity and mercy. No prieſt like this prieſt, God ſmelled a ſweet ſmell only from this ſacrifice.

3. And for his prophetical office, he is a prophet beyond all others, ſuch a one as can inſtruct the ſoul; other men can propound doctrines, but he can open the underſtanding, and hath the key of the heart, the key of David which can open the ſoul, by his holy ſpirit he can make the very ſimple full of knowledge; ſuch a prophet as hath his chair in the very heart of man, this great biſhop of our ſouls, the angel of the covenant, this λογος, the meſſenger of the Father: ſo he is the chief of ten thouſand; conſider him as king, as prieſt, or as prophet.

Uſe.—The uſe of this is exceeding pregnant, comfortable, and large, that we have ſuch a Saviour, ſuch an eminent perſon, ſo near, ſo peculiar to us. Our beloved, my beloved: if he were a beloved the chief of ten thouſand, it were no great matter, but he is mine, he is thus excellent; conſidered with propriety in it, and a peculiar propriety; peculiarity and propriety together with tranſcendent excellency, makes happy, if there be any enjoying of it. Therefore repent not yourſelves of your repentings, but think, I have not caſt away my love, but have ſet it upon ſuch an object as deſerves it, for my beloved is the chiefeſt of ten thouſand.

SERMON FIFTEENTH.

CANTICLES v. 10.

"*My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefeſt among ten thouſand.*"

LOVE is ſuch a boundleſs affection, that where it once breaks forth in praiſes upon a good foundation, it knows no meaſure, as we ſee here in the church, who being provoked, and, as it were, exaſperated by the daughters of Jeruſalem, to explain the excellency of him ſhe had with ſo much affection inceſſantly ſought after, that ſhe might juſtify her choice, ere ſhe deſcend into particulars, ſhe breaks forth into this general deſcription of her beloved, whereby ſhe cuts off from all hopes of equalling him.

him, " My beloved is white and ruddy," (exceeding fair) nay, " the chief among ten thouſand," (none like him) ſhe would not have us think ſhe had beſtowed her love but on the moſt excellent of all, the chief of ten thouſand. Well were it for us that we could do ſo in our love, that we might be able to juſtify our choice, not to ſpend it on ſinful, vain, and unprofitable things, which cauſe repentance and mourning in the concluſion, whereof the church here worthily cleareth herſelf, in that ſhe had choſen the chief among ten thouſand.

And moſt juſtly did ſhe place her affections upon ſo excellent an object, who was ſo full of " all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge, the life of our life, in whom dwelt all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily," in whom was a gracious mixture and compound of all heavenly graces, where greatneſs and goodneſs, juſtice and mercy, God and man, meet in one perſon. Such a one who breaks no bruiſed reed, nor quenches the ſmoaking flax, who refuſes not ſinners, but invites them unto him: he is a king indeed; but this alſo approves her choice; he rules all, commands all, judges all. What then can ſhe want who hath ſuch a friend, ſuch a huſband, whoſe government is ſo winning, mild and merciful?

He is not ſuch a monarch as loves to get authority by ſternneſs, like Rehoboam; but by thoſe amiable graces of gentleneſs and love, all the excellencies of holineſs, purity, and righteouſneſs are ſweetly tempered with love and meekneſs in him. You may ſee, for inſtance, how takes his diſciples' part againſt the phariſees, and the poor woman's that came to waſh his feet and kiſſed them, againſt the phariſee that had invited him to dinner. The church is a company of deſpiſed people, that are ſcorned of phariſaical proud ſpirits, who perhaps have morality and ſtrength of parts to praiſe them with. Now Chriſt takes part with the broken ſpirits againſt all proud ſpirits; although he be gone to heaven, where he is full of majeſty, yet he hath not forgotten his meekneſs, nor changed his nature with change of honour. He is now more honoured than he was; for, he hath a name above all names, in heaven or in earth, yet he is piteous ſtill; " Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?" He makes the church's caſe his own ſtill; together with beams of glory, there are bowels of pity in him, the ſame that he had here upon earth: which makes him ſo lovely to the truly broken hearted believing ſoul. " My beloved is white and ruddy."

He is ſet out likewiſe by comparing him with all others whatſoever,

ſoever, he is the chief of ten thouſand, a certain number for an uncertain, that is, the chief among all. In all things Chriſt hath the pre-eminence; He is the firſt born from the dead, he is the firſt born of every creature, he is the eldeſt brother, he is the chief among all: for all kings, prieſts, and prophets before were but types and ſhadows of him: He is the body, and the ſubſtance; and, as was ſhewed before, he is all three in one, king, prieſt and prophet, the great doctor and prophet of the church, that ſpake by all the former prophets, and ſpeaks by the miniſters to the end of the world. The angel of the covenant, the word that expreſſeth his Father's breaſt, that as he came from the boſom of his Father, ſo he lays open his council to mankind. It was he that ſpake by Noah, and preached by his ſpirit to the ſouls that are now in priſon, as Peter ſpeaks; ſo he is the chief among all: but eſpecially in regard of his righteouſneſs; for which Paul accounted all dung and droſs to be found in Chriſt, not having his own righteouſneſs, but the righteouſneſs which is in Chriſt: which is more than the righteouſneſs of an angel, being the righteouſneſs of God-man, and above all, the righteouſneſs of the law.

But what is this to us or to the church? Yes, for his beauty and excellency is the church's, becauſe he is the church's.—"My beloved is white and ruddy, and my beloved is the chief among ten thouſand." It is the peculiar intereſt that the church hath in Chriſt that doth reliſh her ſpirit, excellency with propriety in him: "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." The more excellent the huſband is, the more excellent is his wife, ſhe only ſhines in his beams; therefore it is the intereſt that we have in Chriſt that endears Chriſt to us. But to come to more particular application of it: Is Chriſt thus excellent, ſuperexcellent, thus tranſcendently excellent, white and ruddy, the chief of ten thouſand? This ſerves, 1. To draw thoſe that are not yet in Chriſt unto him. 2. To comfort thoſe that are in Chriſt.

Uſe 1.—Firſt, thoſe that are not yet in Chriſt, not contracted to him to draw them, what can prevail more than that which is in Chriſt? Beauty and excellencies, greatneſs and goodneſs.—And indeed one main end of our calling, the miniſtry, is to lay open and unfold the unſearchable riches of Chriſt, to dig up the mine, thereby to draw the affections of thoſe that belong to God to Chriſt. But it is not enough to know that there are excellencies in Chriſt to draw us to him; but there muſt be a ſight of our miſery,

miſery, what beggars we are, and how indebted. Before we are in Chriſt we are not our own, the devil lays claim to us that we are his, death lays claim to us, we are under ſin, we cannot ſatisfy one of a thouſand; therefore this enforceth to make out to join with him that can diſcharge all our debts, anſwer all our ſuits, and non-ſuit ſatan in the court of heaven. When once we are married to the Lord of heaven and earth, all is ours. We have a large charter, "All things are yours, and ye are Chriſt's, and Chriſt is God's."

Queſt.—Why are all things ours?

Anſ.—Becauſe we are married to Chriſt, who is Lord over all. It is the end of our calling to ſue for a marriage between Chriſt and every ſoul; we are the friends of the bride to bring the church to him, and the friends of the church to bring Chriſt to them. It is the end of our miniſtry to bring the ſoul and Chriſt together; and let no debts, no ſins hinder; for eſpecially he invites ſuch as are ſenſible of their ſins; where ſin abounds, grace abounds much more. "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden." And he came to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt. He requires no more, but that we be ſenſible of our debts and miſeries, which ſenſe he works likewiſe by his holy ſpirit.

Again, for thoſe that have entertained Chriſt, let them ſee what an excellent gracious perſon they have entertained, who is the chief of ten thouſand. The world thinks them a company of ſilly mean people that make choice of Chriſt, religion, the word, and ſuch things; but here is a juſtification of their choice, they choſe him that is the chief of ten thouſand. "Let him kiſs me with the kiſſes of his mouth, (ſaith the ſpouſe) for thy love is better than wine, nay than life itſelf." A chriſtian may juſtify the choice that he hath made, with Mary, of the good part, againſt all thoſe that ſhall diſparage his choice. Let the world account chriſtians what they will, that they are a company of deluded beſotted perſons, fools and mad men, the chriſtian is the only wiſe man. Wiſdom is ſeen in choice eſpecially, and here is the choice of that which is excellent and moſt excellent of all, the chief of ten thouſand.

Uſe 3.—So alſo, we ſee here the deſperate and baſe folly of all whatſoever, ſave true chriſtians. What do they make choice of to join to? That which is baſe, the condemned world, vain tranſitory

tranſitory things, and refuſe Chriſt. Are they in their right wits who refuſe a husband that is noble for birth, rich for eſtate, mighty for power, abundant in kindneſs and love itſelf, every way excellent, and take a baſe, ignoble, beggarly perſon? This is the choice of the world God complains, "Iſrael would none of me," &c. What ſhall we judge, therefore, of thoſe that will none of Chriſt, when he wooes and ſues them, but prefer, with Eſau, a meſs of pottage before their eternal birth-right; with Adam, an apple before Paradiſe; and with Judas, thirty pieces of ſilver before Chriſt himſelf? This is the ſtate of many men. To be married to Chriſt, is to take him for an husband, to be ruled by him in all things. Now when we prefer baſe commodities and contentments before peace of conſcience, and the enjoying of his love, what is it but for pelf and commodity, thirty pieces of ſilver, (perhaps for ſixpence, a thing of nothing) to refuſe Chriſt? Yet this is the condition of baſe worldlings that live by ſenſe and not by faith. So then as it ſerves to comfort thoſe that have made a true choice, ſo it ſerves to ſhew the madneſs and folly of all others, which one day will feel their hearts full of horror and confuſion, and their faces of ſhame, when they ſhall think, What! hath Chriſt made ſuch ſuit to my heart to win my love? hath he ordained a miniſtry for to bring me in; made ſuch large promiſes? is he ſo excellent? and was this diſcovered to me, and yet would I none of him? What did I chuſe, and what did I leave? I left Chriſt with all his riches, and made choice of the pleaſures and profits of ſin, which are but for a ſeaſon. When the conſcience is once thoroughly awaked, this will torment it; the puniſhment of loſs, not only of loſs ſimply, as the loſs of Chriſt and the loſs of heaven, but the loſs of Chriſt and of heaven ſo diſcovered and opened. Therefore there is no condition in the world ſo terrible as of thoſe that live in the church, and hear thoſe things of Chriſt crucified unfolded to them before their eyes, as Paul ſpeaks of the miniſtry, it makes Chriſt's croſs as open to them as if he had been crucified before their eyes; yet, notwithſtanding, yield to their baſe hearts, deſires and affections, before thoſe excellencies, which, if they had a ſpirit of faith, would draw their hearts to him.

Therefore let us conſider how we hear thoſe things; it concerns us nearly. On the one ſide we ſee what we get if we join with Chriſt, we have him and his: on the contrary we loſe him, and not only ſo, but we gain eternal miſery, and periſh eternally. O what baſeneſs of mind poſſeſſeth us! Chriſt left all things in

love

love to us, and we leave Chriſt for any paltry thing in the world almoſt, to pleaſe and content the humours of ſinful men, to attain a few empty titles, to get a little wealth, enjoy a little pleaſure. You ſee, then, the equity of that terrible commination that you have, 1 Cor. xvi. "If any man love not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, let him be Anathema maranatha;" let him be accurſed for ever that loves not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. If any man ſin, there is a remedy to diſcharge his ſin in Jeſus Chriſt, if he will marry and take him: But when Chriſt is offered, and we will have none of him, we ſin againſt the goſpel, and then there is no remedy, there is nothing but Anathema and Maranatha; therefore the moſt dangerous ſins of all are thoſe againſt the light of the goſpel, when yet we chooſe rather to live as we liſt, than to join ourſelves to Chriſt. To this purpoſe, Heb. ii. St. Paul makes an uſe of the firſt chapter, wherein he ſets out the excellency of Chriſt whom the angels adore. He is ſo beautiful, ſo lovely, that God the Father is in love with him, and pronounceth, "This is my beloved Son." In the beginning of the ſecond chapter, "Wherefore, (ſaith he) how ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great ſalvation?" For "if they eſcaped not that deſpiſed Moſes law, &c. how ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great ſalvation?" He ſays not, if we oppoſe Chriſt, but if we neglect him, if we do not love ſo great ſalvation: As 2 Theſ. i. 8. it is ſaid "Chriſt will come in flaming fire to take vengeance of all thoſe that do not know God, and obey not the goſpel of Chriſt," though they do not perſecute it.

Therefore this reproves all civil moral perſons, that think they have riches enough; not only debauched perſons, but ſelf ſufficient perſons, that think they have any righteouſneſs of their own, let them know, that Chriſt ſhall come in flaming fire to take vengeance of ſuch. This is the ſcope of the ſecond Pſalm, which ye know ſets out the excellency of Chriſt, "I have ſet my king upon Zion." God the Father there anoints Chriſt king of the church: To what end? That we ſhould kiſs the Son, kiſs him with the kiſs of ſubjection, (as ſubjects do their prince), with the kiſs of love, as the ſpouſe doth her husband, and with the kiſs of faith. But what if we do not kiſs him, and ſubject ourſelves to him, love him and believe in him? "If his wrath be once kindled, happy are all thoſe that truſt in him." He is a Lamb, but ſuch a one as can be angry; as Rev. vi. it is ſaid, "The kings and great perſons of the world fly from the wrath of the Lamb;" he that is ſo ſweet, mild and gentle, if we join

with

with him; on the contrary, if we come not unto him, we ſhall find the wrath of the Lamb a terrible wrath, which the greateſt potentates in the world ſhall deſire to be hid from. "If his wrath be once kindled, bleſſed are all thoſe that truſt in him," and woe be to them that do not receive him.

Uſe 2.—For us that profeſs ourſelves to be in Chriſt, and to be joined to him that is thus excellent, let us make this uſe, to make him the rule of our choice in other things. In the choice of friends, chuſe ſuch as are friends to Chriſt, take heed of ſociety with idolaters, or with profane wretched perſons. If you will be joined to Chriſt, and profeſs yourſelves to be ſo, then let us join to none but thoſe that we can enjoy and Chriſt too. So in marriage, let the rule of choice be the love of Chriſt; and likewiſe let the meaſure of our reſpect to all things be the reſpect to Chriſt; let us meaſure our love to wife and children, to kindred, friends, and to all creatures whatſoever, as it may ſtand with love to Chriſt. Obey in the Lord, marry in the Lord, do all things in the Lord, ſo as may ſtand with the love and allowance of the Lord.

Uſe 3.—Make alſo a uſe of direction, how to come to value Chriſt thus, as to keep an high eſteem of him, for this follows infallibly and undeniably. If Chriſt be the chief of ten thouſand, he muſt have the chief of our affections above ten thouſand; for as he is in excellency, he muſt have place in our hearts anſwerable thereto; for then our ſouls are as they ſhould be, when they judge of, and affect things as they are in themſelves.

Anſ.—Firſt, let us enter into a ſerious conſideration of the need we have of Chriſt, of our miſery without him, of our happineſs if we be joined with him; the ſoul being thus convinced, the affections muſt needs follow the ſanctified judgement.

What will come of it, if Chriſt be ſet in the higheſt place in our heart? If we crown him there, and make him King of kings and Lord of lords, in a hearty ſubmitting of all the affections of the ſoul to him, while the ſoul continues in that frame, it cannot be drawn to ſin, diſcomfort, or deſpair. The honours, pleaſures and profits that are got by baſe engagements to the humours of men, what are theſe to Chriſt? When the ſoul is rightly poſſeſſed of Chriſt and of his excellency, it diſdains that any thing ſhould come in competition with him.

Again, it ſtands firm againſt all diſcouragements whatſoever, for

for it ſets Chriſt againſt all, who is the chief of ten thouſand.—The ſoul, in this caſe, will ſet Chriſt againſt the anger and wrath of God, againſt ſatan and all our ſpiritual enemies. Chriſt is the angel of the covenant; ſatan is a lion, a roaring lion: Chriſt the lion of the tribe of Judah; ſatan a ſerpent, a dragon: But Chriſt the true brazen ſerpent, the very looking upon whom will take away all the ſtings and fiery darts of ſatan whatſoever. Wherefore it is ſaid, 1 John v. that faith is that which overcometh the world. How doth faith overcome the world? Becauſe it overcomes all things in the world; as on the right hand pleaſures, and profits and honours; and on the left hand threatenings, pains, loſſes and diſgraces, by ſetting Chriſt againſt all.

2. Again, if we would have a right judgment and eſteem of Chriſt, let us labour to wean our affections as much as may be from other things. Fleſhly hearts, that have run ſo deeply into the world and vanities of this preſent life, it is in a ſort an extraordinary taſk for them to be drawn away, and pulled from the world, (as a child from a full breaſt) which they have ſucked ſo long. Now for young affections that are tender, it is an excellent advantage they have, to conſider betimes that there is that in religion and in the goſpel, which is worth their beſt and prime affections, the flower and marrow of them. Let them begin, with young Timothy, Daniel and Joſeph, to love Chriſt from their childhood. It is a deſperate folly, on the other hand, to put off the regard of good things till after, when we ſhall be leſs fit; when the underſtanding ſhall be darkened, and the affections blunted; when we ſhall not have that edge, nature being decayed, and the world having taken ſuch poſſeſſion of the ſoul, that we ſhall not value this excellency. Therefore, let us begin betimes to make up the marriage between Chriſt and the ſoul No time, indeed, is too late, but it were to be wiſhed that thoſe that are young would be thus wiſe for their ſouls betimes.

Beſides, if we would highly value Chriſt, beg of God a ſpirit that we may judge aright of our corruptions; for in what meaſure we can diſcern the height, and breadth, and depth of our corrupt nature, in that meaſure ſhall we judge of the height, and breadth, and depth of the excellency of Chriſt. The ſweeteſt ſouls are the moſt humble ſouls; thoſe that love Chriſt moſt are thoſe that have been ſtung moſt with the ſenſe of their ſins;—where ſin moſt abounds in the ſenſe and feeling of it, grace much more abounds in the ſenſe and feeling of that. Did ever ſoul

love Chriſt more than that woman that had ſo many devils caſt out of her? and Paul, that had ſuch great ſins forgiven? Doth any man ſo love his creditor as he that hath much debt forgiven him? It is our Saviour Chriſt's own reaſon, therefore theſe two go always with the true church. 1. The true knowledge of the corruption of nature, and miſery by reaſon of it; and, 2. The true ſenſe and feeling of it, with true and hearty ſorrow for it, &c. In popery they, ſlight original ſin, that mother-breeding ſin; actual ſins are venial ſins, and many ſins no ſins: And therefore they eſteem ſo ſlightly of Chriſt, that they join ſaints, the pope, works and ſatisfaction with him, becauſe they know not the depth of the malady, how black ſin is, what a curſed eſtate we are in by nature. They have ſlight, ſhallow, and weak conceits of ſin; therefore they have anſwerable, weak, and ſhallow thoughts of Chriſt, and of his righteouſneſs and excellency.—Therefore the conviction of our ſins goeth before the conviction of righteouſneſs in Chriſt: As it is ſaid, John xvi. the Holy Ghoſt ſhall convince the world of ſin, and then of righteouſneſs: For except the ſoul be convinced of ſin and of ill in itſelf, it will never be truly convinced of good, and of righteouſneſs in Chriſt.

The paſſover was always eaten with four herbs, becauſe it ſhould add a reliſh to the feaſt: So Chriſt, the true paſſover, we never reliſh truly without four herbs; the conſideration of ſin, with the deſert of it. Chriſt favours otherwiſe to a man humbled for his ſins, than he doth to another man not touched therewith; otherwiſe to a poor man than he doth to a rich; otherwiſe to a man that the world goes not well on his ſide, than to a proſperous man. One ſavoury diſcourſe of Chriſt reliſheth more to an afflicted ſoul, than ſeven diſcourſes with ſuch as are drunk with proſperity, not having a brain ſtrong enough to conceive, nor an appetite to reliſh heavenly things.

Therefore why do we murmur at the croſs, when all is to recover our ſpiritual taſte and reliſh? Solomon had loſt his taſte and reliſh of Chriſt. He never made his Song of Songs when he was in his idolatrous way, nor was ſo in love with Chriſt and his excellencies, when he doated ſo much upon his wives: No; but when he had recovered his ſpirits, the taſte and reliſh of heavenly things once, then made he the book of the Preacher. When he had run through variety of things, and ſaw all to be nothing but vexation of ſpirit, and, beſides that, vanity, then he paſſeth his verdict upon all things, that they were vanity. So it is with

us,

us, we can hardly prize Chriſt without ſome afflictions, ſome croſs or other; therefore here the church is fain to endure a ſpiritual deſertion, to ſet an edge upon her affections. Now when ſhe is thus in her deſertions, Chriſt is white and ruddy, the chief of ten thouſand.

We value more, and ſet a higher price on things in the want of them, (ſuch is our corruption) than in the enjoying of them.—And if God remember us not with affliction, then let us afflict, humble, and judge ourſelves; enter into our own ſouls, to view how we ſtand affected to Chriſt, to heaven, and to heavenly things. How do I reliſh them and eſteem them? If I have loſt my eſteem and valuing, where have I loſt it? Conſider in what ſin, in what pleaſure, in what company I loſt it, and converſe no more with ſuch as blunt our affections to heavenly things.

4. And let us make uſe, likewiſe, of our infirmities and ſins to this purpoſe, to ſet an high price on the excellencies of Chriſt.—We carry about us always infirmities and corruptions, what uſe ſhall we make of them? Not to truſt to our own righteouſneſs, which is as a defiled cloth; but to fly to Chriſt's righteouſneſs, which is the righteouſneſs of God-man, all being as dung and droſs in regard of that. Often think with thyſelf, What am I? A poor ſinful creature; but I have a righteouſneſs in Chriſt that anſwers all: I am weak in myſelf, but Chriſt is ſtrong, and I am ſtrong in him: I am fooliſh in myſelf, but I am wiſe in him; what I want in myſelf, I have in him: He is mine, and his righteouſneſs is mine, which is the righteouſneſs of God-man; being cloathed with this, I ſtand ſafe againſt conſcience, hell, wrath, and all things: Though I have daily experience of my ſins, yet there is more righteouſneſs in Chriſt, who is mine, and who is the chief of ten thouſand, than there is ſin in me. When thus we ſhall know Chriſt, then we ſhall know him to purpoſe.

SERMON SIXTEENTH.

CANTICLES v. 10, 11, 12, 13.

My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as fine gold, his locks are bushy and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves, by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set, &c.

Object. HENCE, likewise, we may answer some doubts that may arise; as why the death of one man (Christ) should be of value for satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. How can this be?

Ans.—O but what kind of man was he? The chief among ten thousand, especially considering that his excellency ariseth from the grace of his personal union of God and man. The first Adam tainted thousands, and would have tainted a world of men more if there had been more; but he was mere man that did this. And shall not Christ, God and man, the second Adam, advance the world, and ten thousand worlds, if there had been more? "He is chief among ten thousand. His head is as most fine gold, his locks are bushy and black as a raven," &c.

1. Positively, he is white and ruddy. 2. Comparatively, he is the chiefest of ten thousand.

The church doth not think it sufficient, in general, to set out Christ thus, but she descends into a particular description of him, by all the parts of a body that are conspicuous. First, in general, observe hence, that it is the nature of love, upon all occasions, to reflect upon the thing loved. As the church here, from things that are excellent in the world, borrows phrases and comparisons to set out the excellency of Christ, exalting him above any other thing. Whatsoever the soul of a christian sees in heaven or earth, it takes occasion, thence, to think of Christ.

Again, in general observe from hence, seeing the church fetcheth a comparison from doves eyes, from the body of a man, and other things, that there are some beams of excellency in every creature. There is somewhat of God in every creature; this makes the meditation of the creature to be useful. There is none, even the meanest, but it hath a being, and thereby, in a sort

ſort, ſets out the being of God. Why doth God ſtile himſelf a ſhield, a rock, a buckler, a ſhadow, and the like, but to ſhew that there is ſomething of him in theſe, and therefore to teach us to riſe from them to him in whom all thoſe excellencies that are ſcattered in them are united? In innocency we knew God, and in him we had knowledge of the creature; but now we are fain to help ourſelves from the knowledge of the creature, to riſe to the knowledge of God.

His head is as fine gold.

A little in general. See the boldneſs and largeneſs of the church's affections, who though ſhe had been ill treated by the watchmen and others, yet is ſhe not diſheartened for all this.—No; ſhe goes on, and ſets out particular commendations of her beloved. Where love hath any ſtrength, no water can quench it. You ſee the church here found but cold entertainment from the watchmen and others, that ſhould have been better. Nay, ſhe was in deſertion, yet ſhe was not diſcourrged, nay not from the deſertion that Chriſt left her in, but ſhe ſeeks after him whom her ſoul loved. Oh! this is the ſign of a true ſanctified ſoul touched from heaven, never to give over ſeeking of Chriſt, nor ſetting out his praiſes, even though it thinks itſelf not beloved of Chriſt. Aſk ſuch ones, Do you love God, his children, and his word? Oh! you ſhall have them eloquent, no words are enough to ſet out their affections. And this is one reaſon, which we may note by the way, why God plants in his children, at their firſt converſion, a ſweet love, which we call the firſt love, that when deſertions come, they may call to mind what they felt from Chriſt, and what they bore to him; and thereupon the church concludes, Hoſ ii. "I will return to my firſt love, for then was I better than now." The church here, from what doth ſhe commend her beloved, but from ſomewhat that was left in her ſoul, ſome inward taſte of the love of Chriſt in her? She called to mind how it was with her before, in the former part of this, and in the latter end of the former chapter, what an excellent ſtate ſhe had been in; this helped her to recover herſelf.

Now you may ſay, Why is ſhe ſo exact in reckoning up ſo many particulars of her beloved, his head, locks, eyes, lips, and ſuch like?

1. Why, It is from largeneſs of affection; a large heart hath always large expreſſions; when we are barren in expreſſions

towards Chriſt, and of good things, whence comes this but from narrow poor affections? The church had large affections, therefore ſhe had ſuitable expreſſions.

2. And then ſhe is thus particular, becauſe Chriſt hath not one but many excellencies; every thing in him is excellent, inward and outward, as his head, &c. for indeed beauty conſiſts not in ſweetneſs of colour only, but in affinity and proportion of all parts. Now there is all ſweet proportion in Chriſt; ſo it ſhould be with chriſtians, they ſhould not have one excellency but many: thoſe that receive grace for grace from Chriſt, have not only head, eyes, hands, and feet good, but all lovely, grace for grace, anſwerable to the variety of graces in Jeſus Chriſt, in whom all things jointly, and every thing ſeverally are lovely.

3. Then ſhe ſheweth her particular care and ſtudy to be exact in this knowledge of Chriſt, to rip him up and anatomize him thus from head to foot, it argueth ſhe had ſtudied Chriſt well ere ſhe could attain this excellency: ſo it ſhould be the ſtudy and care of every chriſtian to ſtudy the excellencies of Chriſt not only in general, to ſay as much as you have in the creed; he was born for us of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, dead, and buried, &c. which every child can ſay; but to be able to particularize the high perfections and excellencies of Chriſt, as the church did here; to ſtudy his nature, offices, the ſtate he was in, and how he carried himſelf in his humiliation and exaltation; what good we have by both ſtates, redemption by his abaſement, application of it by his advancement; what he did for us on earth, what he doth in heaven, what in juſtification, adoption, ſanctification, and in the glory to come. Study every thing, and warm the heart with the meditation of them.

This particular ſpreading and laying open the excellencies of Chriſt is a thing worthy of a chriſtian. We make ſlight work of religion, we can be particular and eloquent enough in other things, but in that wherein all eloquence is too little, how barren are we, how baſhful to ſpeak of Chriſt and his excellencies in baſe company, as if it were a diſhonour! Let us therefore learn this from the church here, to be much in thoughts and meditations of the excellencies of Chriſt, and ſo our expreſſions will be anſwerable to our meditations. So the holy fathers that were godly, (till another kind of divinity came into the world of quirks and ſubtleties) there was none of them but was excellent in this way. Paul admirable, accounting all dung and droſs in compari-

ſon

ſon of Chriſt. In ſpeaking of him, when he begins, he goes on from one thing to another, as if he were raviſhed, and knew not how nor where to end.

The ſoul hath ſights of Chriſt that God ſhews to it, and which the ſoul preſents to itſelf by the help of the ſpirit. The ſights that God in this kind ſhews are to thoſe in affliction eſpecially, as Daniel and Iſaiah ſaw Chriſt in his glory in a viſion: ſo Ezekiel had a viſion, and John, Rev. i. where Chriſt was preſented to him gloriouſly. So there is a glorious deſcription of Chriſt preſent to the church, Rev. iv. v.

And as there are ſights let down from God into the ſoul, ſo there are ſights that the ſoul frames of Chriſt, ſuch as the church here conceives of him by faith; thus Moſes ſaw him before he was incarnate, and Abraham ſaw his day and rejoiced; ſo ſhould we now have ſpiritual ſights, ideas of Chriſt framed to our ſouls, this is to beſtow our ſouls as we ſhould do. So much for general, now we come to ſome particulars. "His head is as fine gold, his locks are buſhy and black as a raven."

His head as fine gold.

He begins to ſet out the excellency of the chief part, the head. The head of Chriſt is God, as it is, 1. Cor. xi. 3. He is above all, God only is above him. All is yours, and you are Chriſt's, and Chriſt is God's, but that is not ſo much intended here, as to ſhew Chriſt's authority over the church, as God and man. "His head is as fine gold," that is, his government and authority is a moſt ſweet and golden government.

Daniel ii. you have an image of the monarchies, the firſt whereof had a golden head, which was the Chaldean. The beſt monarchy is ſet out by the beſt metal, gold: ſo Chriſt the head of the church is a precious head, a head of gold.

A head hath an eminence above all others, an influence and motion above all other parts, it is the ſeat of the ſenſes: ſo this golden head is more eminent than all, governs the whole church, and hath influence on all; in him we live, and move, and have our being.

Queſt.—Why is Chriſt thus as king reſembled to an head of gold?

Anſ.—Becauſe gold is the chief, the moſt precious, durable

metal of all others. Chriſt is a king for ever, and hath an everlaſting government. Gold is alſo the moſt pliable metal, you may beat it out to leaves more than any other metal whatſoever. Chriſt is all gold indeed, his love hath beat himſelf out as low as may be, all for our good.—What abaſement like to Chriſt's? That which is moſt precious is moſt communicating, as the ſun, a glorious creature, what doth ſo much good as it? ſo Chriſt, as he is the moſt excellent of all, "the chief of ten thouſand," ſo is he alſo the moſt communicative; what good like the good that Chriſt did? he was beaten out of love to mankind to the loweſt abaſement for us, though this be not chiefly aimed at here, yet (by the way) ſpeaking of gold, we may preſent to ourſelves ſuch comfortable meditations.

Uſe 1.—Well then, is Chriſt ſuch an excellent head, a golden head, in whom are hid all the treaſures of wiſdom to govern his church, what need we then to go to that triple crown, having ſuch a golden head? the apoſtacy of the church hath found out another golden head, is not Chriſt precious enough? Let us take heed of leaving the head Chriſt, as it is, Col. ii. 19. It is a damnable thing to forſake him. Let the apoſtatical church alone with her Antichriſt.

2. Again, if Chriſt be a golden head, let us his members labour every one to be ſuitable, though there be a difference between the head and the members in many reſpects, eſpecially in thoſe three formerly named, eminence, government, and influence; yet for nature they are one, head and members make but one. ſo that as the head of the body is gold, ſo ſhould every member be; therefore the ſeven churches are ſtiled ſeven golden Candleſticks. Every thing in the Tabernacle was gold, even to the ſnuffers, to ſhew that in the church every thing is excellent. The Tabernacle was gold moſt of it, though it was covered with badgers' ſkins. The church indeed hath a poor covering, as of badgers' ſkins, not gilded as hypocrites, but it is precious within. Again, Chriſt as he is gold, ſo he is fine gold, whole gold, he hath not only the crown on him, but his head is gold itſelf. Other kings have their crown of gold, but their heads are not ſo; but there is ſuch a precious treaſure of wiſdom in him, that his head is gold: ſo let the church and every chriſtian labour not to be gilded but gold, to be thoroughly good, to have the inſide as good as the outſide, the heart as good as the converſation; the church is glorious within, Pſal. xlv. Beloved, Is Chriſt

an

an excellent golden head, and ſhall he have a baſe body? Is he fit to be united to a golden head, who is a common drunkard, a ſwearer, that is a beaſt in his life and converſation, is this ſuitable?

3. Again, Is our head ſo golden, and whatſoever excellency we have, is it from our head? therefore as the church in the Revelation, let us caſt all our crowns at his feet. Have we crowns of gold, have we any thing that is excellent within, any grace, any comfort? let us lay it down at his feet, for all is from him. Natural men have golden images of their own, Iſrael would have golden calves, Nebuchadnezzar ſets up a golden image, and all muſt worſhip it: ſo in the declining times of the church, they framed golden images, that is, a golden, whoriſh religion, gilded, and painted, framed by their own brain, whereunto all muſt ſtoop. But the true gold is what we muſt reſpect and ſubmit ourſelves unto, and admire: others are but golden dreams like images, as Nebuchadnezzar's was, Chriſt's head alone is of fine gold.

All muſt be fine gold that comes from this head; his word is gold, ſometimes purged in the fire; his ordinances gold, in the ſcripture phraſe, the city, the new Jeruſalem, which ſignifies the ſtate of the church in this world, when it ſhall be refined to the utmoſt, all is of gold, the walls of precious ſtones, the gates of pearl, and the pavement of the ſtreets of pure gold, to ſhew the excellency of reformation, which golden times are yet to come; in the mean time let us go on and wait for them.

His locks are buſhy and black as a raven.

I think this is but complimental to fill up the other, it is nothing but a commendation of his freſhneſs, a foil to beauty, therefore not particularly to be ſtood upon.

His eyes are as doves eyes by the rivers of waters, &c.

His eyes are as doves eyes, and ſuch eyes as are by the rivers of waters, where they are cleanſed and waſhed with milk, that they may be the clearer, and fitly ſet, neither goggle eyes nor ſunk into the head, but fitly ſet, as a jewel in a ring, neither too much in nor too much out, to ſet out the comelineſs of this part, the eye, which is the glory of the face.

Queſt.—Why is Chriſt ſaid to have the eyes of doves?

Anſ.—The dove hath many enemies, eſpecially the white dove

dove is a fair mark for the birds of prey, therefore God hath given that creature a quick ſight, that ſhe might diſcern her enemies. Thus the ſcripture helps us to conceive of the quickneſs of Chriſt's eye, Rev. v. 6. there are ſeven horns and ſeven eyes, which are the ſeven ſpirits of God; here Chriſt the Lamb hath ſeven eyes and ſeven horns; what be theſe? Chriſt hath not only horns of power, as the enemies have horns of violence; he hath horn againſt horn; but ſeven eyes, that is, a quick ſight to ſee all the danger the church is in, and ſeven eyes; ſeven is a word of perfection, that is, he hath many eyes, an accurate ſight; he hath not only an eye of providence over the whole world, but an eye of grace and favour, lively and lovely in regard of his church. All things are naked and open before his eyes, as it is, Heb. iv. he can ſee through us, he knows our very hearts reins, which he muſt do ex officio, becauſe he muſt be our judge. He that is judge of all, had need to have eyes that will pierce through all. It had need be a quick eye that muſt judge of the heart and affections; but what we may learn hence is, That we have a Saviour who hath doves eyes, that is, clear eyes able to diſcern.

Uſe 1.—Take it as a point, firſt of all comfort to the church, that when we have any imputation lying upon us, that we are thus and thus, Chriſt hath quick eyes, he knows our hearts, "Thou knoweſt, (ſaith Peter) Lord, that I love thee." In all falſe imputations reſt in the eye-ſight of Chriſt, he knows it is otherwiſe with us.

Uſe 2.—Then again, in all abaſement, know that there is an eye that ſees all; he ſees with his eye, and pities with his heart: as he hath a quick eye, ſo hath he a tender heart, though he ſeems to ſleep and to wink, it is but that we may wake him with our prayers, which when we have done, we ſhall ſee that Chriſt hath ſeen all this while, and that the violence the enemies of God have offered to his church, the ſpouſe, hath been in his ſight, and that they ſhall know at length to their coſt.

Likewiſe it is a point of terror to all hypocrites and others that think to blindfold Chriſt again. Can they blindfold him in heaven that hath this ſharp eye? No, he ſees all their courſes and projects what they are, and what they tend to, and as he ſees them, ſo he will ſpread them all open ere long.

Uſe 3.—And as it is a point of comfort and terror, ſo it is a point

point of inſtruction to us all, that we having to deal with a judge that ſees all, to worſhip Chriſt in ſpirit. If we had knowledge that ſuch an eye of God is fixed upon us in all places, in all our affections and actions, would we give liberty to baſe and filthy thoughts, to cruel deſigns, and to treacherous aims and intents, to hatch a hell, as it were, in our hearts, and to carry a fair ſhew outwardly? it could not be. Men are not afraid of their thoughts, affections, deſires, and inward delights of the ſoul, becauſe there is no eye of juſtice upon them; but if they did conſider that the all ſeeing God did obſerve theſe inward evils, and would call them to account one day for them, then they would be as much afraid to think ill as to do ill.

His cheeks are as beds of ſpices, and as ſweet flowers.

Cheeks are the grace of the face, they are uſed here to denote the preſence of Chriſt, which is ſweet as ſpices and flowers; not only his preſence is glorious in heaven, when we ſhall ſee that goodly perſon of Chriſt that became man for us, that transforming ſight that ſhall make us like himſelf; but the ſpiritual preſence of Chriſt in his ordinances, which we are capable of here; this is as ſpices and flowers.

Object.—But you will ſay, Cheeks, face, and preſence preſent colours to the eyes, and not ſmells, as ſpices and flowers do, which are the peculiar objects of another ſenſe.

Anſ.—Oh but Chriſt is the object of all the ſenſes. Beloved, he is not only beauty to the eye, but ſweetneſs to the ſmell, and to the taſte; therefore faith hath the name of all the ſenſes, to ſee, hear, taſte, and ſmell, and doth all, becauſe it carries us to Chriſt, that is inſtead of all to us; but the point is, that the manifeſtation of Chriſt to his church and children by his ſpirit in any of his ordinances, is a ſweet manifeſtation, and delectable as ſpices and flowers, as it is, Cant. i. 3. "Becauſe of the ſavour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured out, therefore the virgins love thee." The very name of Chriſt, when he is known and laid open by the miniſtry, is a precious ointment, and the virgins, that is, all chaſte ſouls, follow him by the ſmell of his ointments; all his ordinances convey a ſweetneſs to the ſoul; his ſacraments are ſweet, his word ſweet, the communion of ſaints ſweet. The preſence of the ſun you know is known in the ſpring time by the freſhneſs of all things, which put forth the life and the little livelineſs they have in them;

ſome

ſome in bloſſoming, and ſome in flowers; that which lay as it were dead in winter, comes out when the ſun draws near; ſo when Chriſt comes and ſhews his preſence and face to the ſoul, he refreſheth and delights it.

Hence we ſee they are enemies to Chriſt and to the ſouls of God's people, that hinder the manifeſtation of Chriſt, whereby his face might be ſeen, and his lovely cheeks diſcerned; thoſe that hate and undermine the ordinances of God, they hinder the comforts of their own ſouls.

And they are enemies to Chriſt, for when hath Chriſt glory but when the virgins follow him in the ſcent of his ſweet ointments, when the ſoul in the ſenſe of his ſweetneſs follows him and cleaves to him with joy, love, and delight, this makes him Chriſt, and ſets him up in the heart above all others. This is the proper work of the ordinances. Thoſe therefore that are enemies to the ordinances of Chriſt, are enemies to the ſouls of God's people, and to the glory and honour of Chriſt himſelf. Thus far we may go ſafely upon compariſon of this with other ſcriptures.

SERMON SEVENTEENTH.

CANTICLES v. 13.

" *His lips are like like lillies, dropping ſweet ſmelling myrrh; his* " *hands are as gold rings ſet with beryl; his belly is as bright* " *ivory overlaid with ſapphires; his legs,*" &c.

IN ſpeaking of theſe particulars we are to be very wary, for we have not that foundation as we have in other generals, for no doubt but the ſpirit of God here did more intend to ſet out the large affection that the church had to Chriſt, than to inſinuate any great particularity in every one of theſe; therefore let us only cull out, and take thoſe things that are of more eaſy explication.

His lips are as lillies, dropping ſweet ſmelling myrrh.

That is, his doctrine is as ſweet as the lillies, and ſound as the

the myrrh, keeping from putrefaction, it being the nature of myrrh, as it is found itſelf, ſo to make other things ſound. In like manner the ſpeech of Chriſt makes the ſoul ſound that embraceth it. What was ever more ſweet than the truth of Chriſt? when he ſpake himſelf, they all hung upon his lips (as the phraſe is in the goſpel) as a man hangs upon the lips of another whom he deſires and delights to hear ſpeak, and they marvelled at the gracious words that came out of his lips, Pſal. xlviii. Grace was in his lips, all was ſweet that came from him, for it came from the excellency of his ſpirit, his words were dyed in theſe affections of his heart. In the learned language the ſame word ſignifieth ſpeech and reaſon, to intimate that ſpeech is but the current of reaſon from the heart, the ſeat of reaſon; therefore Chriſt's ſpeeches were ſweet, becauſe his heart was ſweet, full of all love, grace, mercy, and goodneſs; his heart was a treaſure, his lips muſt needs then be ſweet. Beloved, therefore let us hence take a trial of ourſelves what our condition is, whether the words that come from Chriſt when he ſpeaks in his miniſtry to us be ſweet or not.

The word, to ſome kind of men, is like the northern air which pierceth and cutteth; Ahab could not endure the breath of Elias, nor Herodias the breath of John Baptiſt, nor the Phariſees the breath of Stephen and Paul So too many now adays cannot endure the breath of divine truth when it cuts and pierceth. Theſe words are arrows that ſtick; if they ſtick not ſavingly, they ſtick to killing; if we cannot endure Chriſt's breath, we are not his ſpouſe, nor have any commnnion with him.

His lips are like lillies, dropping ſweet ſmelling myrrh, &c.

This is one excellency of Chriſt and of his truth, that it preſerves the ſoul in a pure ſtate, it is pure itſelf, and ſo it preſerves the ſoul. Myrrh is a liquor that keeps from putrefaction; there is nothing that keeps the ſoul but the word that endures for ever, whereas on the other ſide error is of a putrifying nature, corrupting and defiling the ſoul.

His hands are as gold rings ſet with beryl, &c.

Hands are the inſtruments of action; Chriſt's actions are precious, whatſoever he doth to the church, nay even when he doth uſe evil men to afflict and exerciſe the church, he hath a hand there, a golden, a precious hand; in the evil hand of wicked men, God doth all things by Chriſt; he is as it were God's hand

hand which all things paſs through. Joſeph was the ſecond man of Egypt, through whoſe hands all things came to the reſt: ſo all things come through Chriſt's hands to us; and whatſoever is his handy-work is good, even as it is ſaid in the days of his fleſh, he did all things well, ſo ſtill in the church all his workmanſhip is exceeding well; though we cannot ſee the excellency of it, it is all well; both in the government of the church, and his workmanſhip in our hearts, the new creature.

His belly is as bright ivory, overlaid, &c.

His belly, that is his inward parts; in the Hebrew it is uſed for the inward affections, they are as bright as ivory overlaid with ſapphires, that is, they are pure; all the inſide of Chriſt, all his affections that he bears are wondrous good, his love, his deſires, his joys, his hatred, all pure, like pure water in a chriſtal glaſs, it may be ſtirred ſometimes, but ſtill it is clear, there are no dregs at the bottom, becauſe there was no taint of ſin in him.

His legs are as pillars of marble ſet on ſockets of fine gold, &c.

That is, all his paſſages and ways are conſtant and firm even as pillars of marble; his children are ſo likewiſe, as far as they are indued with his ſpirit. Chriſt is yeſterday, to day, and for ever the ſame. In regard of his enemies, Rev. i. he is ſet out in another manner of ſimilitude, as having legs of braſs to trample them all in pieces. But in reſpect of his conſtant truth and ways of goodneſs to his church, his legs are pillars of marble.

His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

Lebanon was a goodly foreſt, lying on the north ſide of Judæa, wherein were excellent plants of all kinds, eſpecially cedars.—Chriſt his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars, that is, his preſence is goodly, ſtately, and majeſtical; ſo it is and will be when he ſhews himſelf indeed for the vindicating of his church; then the enemies thereof ſhall know that his preſence is as Lebanon, and excellent as the cedars.

The children of God are like to the cedars too, for they are Chriſt myſtical. Other men are as ſhrubs to them, men of no value, but they are cedars, and grow as cedars in Lebanon, from perfection to perfection, bearing moſt fruit in their age. Wicked men ſometimes are cedars too, and are ſaid to grow and flouriſh as the cedars in Lebanon: But look a while, and you ſhall

ſhall ſee their place no more, they have no good root, no good foundation. A chriſtian is a cedar ſet in Chriſt the chief cedar, he is a plant that grows in him, he hath an eternal root, and therefore he flouriſheth eternally.

His mouth is moſt ſweet, he is altogether lovely.

His mouth is moſt ſweet; ſhe doubles this commendation, ſhe had ſaid before, his lips are as lillies dropping ſweet myrrh, here ſhe ſaith again of his mouth, it is moſt ſweet, to ſhew that that is the chief lovely thing in Chriſt; the repetition argueth the ſerioufneſs of the church's affection to Chriſt, and of the excellency of that part. The main lovely thing is that which comes from his heart by his word and his lips, as indeed the moſt excellent thing that we can think of is the expreſſion of the heart of God in Chriſt, and of Chriſt's love to us, "His mouth is moſt ſweet." And indeed the beſt diſcovery of true affection to Chriſt, and of a true eſtate in grace, is from affection to the word of Chriſt. Whereſoever there is an intereſt in Chriſt, there is a high reſpect to the word. "My ſheep hear my voice, John x. and you know what Peter ſaith, John vi. Many of Chriſt's hearers and followers forſook him (upon ſome hard ſpeeches, as they thought, that came from him) ſaith Chriſt to Peter, "Will ye alſo leave me?" Peter anſwered again, "Whither, Lord, ſhall we go, thou haſt the words of eternal life?" The Apoſtles who had the ſpirit of God, perceived an incredible graciouſneſs to ſit on his lips, and therefore they hung upon his lips, "Whither ſhall we go, thou haſt the words of eternal life?" If we leave his ſpeech, we leave our comfort, we leave our life.

As a comment hereupon, ſee Pſal. xix. where we have a high commendation of God's excellency: firſt from the book of nature, the works of God, the heavens declare the glory of God; then from the word of God, and herein the Pſalmiſt is wondrous large. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the ſoul, the teſtimonies of the Lord are ſure, making wiſe the ſimple, the ſtatutes of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart, the commandments of the Lord are pure, and enlighten the eyes, more to be deſired than gold, yea than fine gold, ſweeter alſo than honey or the honey-comb.

But mark the order; when is the word of God precious as gold, ſweeter than the honey or the honey-comb; but when the former

former commendation takes place, where the word is perfect, converting the ſoul, and where it is ſure, making wiſe the ſimple, and where the fear of the Lord is clean, &c. There it is more to be deſired than fine gold, and ſweeter than the honey-comb. So the church here finding firſt of all the word to be a converting word, and giving underſtanding to the ſimple, ſhe cannot but ſpeak of the ſweetneſs of the word of Chriſt, his lips are as lillies dropping ſweet ſmelling myrrh, his mouth is moſt ſweet. Thus a man may know his eſtate in grace by his reliſh of the word.

There is a divine and a heavenly reliſh in the word of God; as for inſtance, take the doctrine of his providence, "That all things ſhall work together for the beſt to them that love God." What a ſweet word is this, a whole kingdom is not worth this promiſe, That whatſoever befals a chriſtian in this world, there is an over-ruling providence to ſway all to his good, to help forward his eternal good.

"That Chriſt will be preſent with us in all conditions." What a ſweet word and promiſe is this, "That he will give his holy ſpirit, if we beg it, that he will not fail us nor forſake us. That if we confeſs our ſins and lay them open, he is merciful to forgive them; that if our ſins were as red as ſcarlet, they ſhall all be white as wool." What kind of incredible ſweetneſs is in theſe, to a heart that is prepared for theſe comforts, the doctrine of reconciliation, of adoption, of glory to come, of the offices of Chriſt, and ſuch like, how ſweet are they! they reliſh wondrouſly to a ſanctified ſoul.

Let us therefore judge of our ſtate in grace by this, how do we reliſh divine truths? do we love them more than our appointed food? are they dearer unto us than thouſands of gold and ſilver? Do we like them above all other truths whatſoever? Every truth in its rank is lovely, and is a beam of God: for truth is of God, whereſoever we find it; but what are other truths to this heavenly ſoul-ſaving truth, this goſpel truth that is from Chriſt, "his mouth is moſt ſweet?"

In our nature there is a contrary diſpoſition and antipathy to divine truth. We love the law better than the goſpel, and any truth better than the law. We love a ſtory, any trifling baubling thing concerning our ordinary callings, better than divine truth. In divine truth, as things are more ſpiritual, ſo the more remote

remote they are naturally from our love and liking. Evangelical truths will not down with a natural heart; ſuch a one had rather hear a curious point of ſome vice or virtue finely ſtood upon, than any thing in Chriſt, becauſe he was never convinced of his corrupt and miſerable eſtate by natnre; but when the grace of God hath altered him, and his eyes are open to ſee his miſery, then of all truths the truth of Chriſt ſavours beſt: thoſe truths that come out of Chriſt, and from the miniſtry concerning Chriſt, they are moſt ſweet of all. Oh how ſweet were thoſe words of the goſpel to the poor man, "thy ſins are forgiven thee," do you think they went not to his heart? ſo to the woman, Luke vii. her many ſins are forgiven her, for ſhe loved much. Oh they were words that went to her ſoul. And to the thief on the croſs, "This day thou ſhalt be with me in paradiſe," how do you think thoſe words affected him? ſo it is with us, if ever we have been abaſed in the ſenſe of our ſins, Oh how ſweet is a promiſe of mercy then! "He that brings it is as one of ten thouſand, that comes to declare to man his righteouſneſs," to lay open the mercy that belongs to a diſtreſſed ſoul. Oh the very feet of thoſe that bring theſe glad tidings are beautiful. When our bleſſed Saviour after his reſurrection ſpake to Mary, and called her by her name, after that ſhe ſought him and could not find him (Rabboni, ſaith ſhe) the words of Chriſt they melted her preſently.—Let Chriſt once call us by our names, for he knows us by name, as he knew Moſes, let him by his ſpirit ſpeak to us by name, and own us, then we call him Rabboni, we own him again, for what is our love but the reflection of his back again? Therefore, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, "Let me hear the voice of joy and gladneſs, that the bones that thou haſt broken may rejoice." Let me hear, that is, I long for thy word to hear it, not the bare miniſterial word, but the word of the ſpirit; but the church reſteth not here, but ſaith further,

He is altogether lovely.

Altogether deſirable; as if he ſhould ſay, What! ſhould I ſtand upon particulars, he is altogether from top to toe amiable, lovely and delectable. "He is altogether lovely;" lovely to God, to us, to the ſoul; lovely to him that can beſt judge of lovelineſs. The judgement of God, I hope, will go current with us; and what doth God the Father judge of Chriſt? "This is my beloved Son;" he is the Son of God's love, Col. i. 13. as God cannot but love his own image. He is lovely alſo as a

man, for he was pure and holy; lovely as Mediator by office, for he was anointed by God to convey the Father's love to us. He muſt needs be lovely, in whom all others are loved: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed;" out of him I am well pleaſed with nobody. And indeed he was filled with all graces that might make him lovely, all the treaſures of wiſdom are in him, and of his fulneſs we all receive grace for grace; he is made a ſtorehouſe of all that is good for us. He is lovely to God in whatſoever he did, he carried himſelf lovely, and pleaſed his Father in all his doings and ſufferings. God loved him eſpecially, becauſe he was obedient even unto the death of the croſs; therefore "God gave him a name above every name, that at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, both in heaven and earth." As for the angels they look upon him with admiration, they attended him, and accounted it an honour to wait upon him. He is lovely to all above us, and ſhall he not be lovely to us?

Object.—But you will ſay, Was he lovely when he was nailed on the croſs, hung between two thieves, when he wore a crown of thorns, was whipped, laid grovelling on the ground, when he ſweat water and blood? What lovelineſs was in him when he was laid in his grave?

Anſ.—Oh yes, then he was moſt lovely of all to us. By how much the more he was abaſed for us, this makes him more lovely, that out of love he would abaſe himſelf ſo low. When greatneſs and goodneſs meet together, how goodly is it! That Chriſt, ſo great a majeſty, ſhould have ſuch bowels of compaſſion! Majeſty alone is not lovely, but awful and fearful; but joined with ſuch condeſcending grace, is wondrous amiable. How lovely a ſight is it to ſee ſo great a perſon to be ſo meek and gentle! It was ſo beyond compariſon lovely in the eyes of the diſciples, that they ſtood and wondered to ſee him, who was the eternal word of the Father, condeſcend to talk with a poor Samaritan woman! And what lovelineſs of carriage was in him to Peter, undeſerving, after he had denied and forſworn him, yet to reſtore him to his former place that he had in his heart, loving him as much as ever he did before! In a word, what ſweetneſs, gentleneſs, bowels of meekneſs, pity and compaſſion, did he diſcover to thoſe that were in miſery! We cannot inſiſt upon particulars.

There is a remarkable paſſage in the ſtory of Alphonſus the king, (not very well liked of ſome:) When he ſaw a poor man pulling of his beaſt out of a ditch, he put to his hand to help him

him, after which, as it is recorded, his ſubjects ever loved him the better. It was a wonderful condeſcenſion. And is it not as wonderful that the King of heaven and earth ſhould ſtoop ſo low as to help us, poor worms, out of the ditch of hell and damnation; and that when he hath ſet us in a ſtate of deliverance, he ſhould not leave us there, but advance us to ſuch a ſtate and condition as is above our admiration, which neither heart can conceive, nor tongue expreſs, is not this wonderful condeſcending!

Uſe 1.—That we may further improve this point, Is Chriſt altogether lovely, ſo lovely to us, and ſo beloved of God the Father? Let us then reſt upon his obedience and righteouſneſs, build upon it that God cannot refuſe that righteouſneſs, whoſe ſubject is altogether lovely. Let us come clothed in the garments of our elder brother, and then doubt not of acceptance; for it is in Chriſt that he loves us, in this well beloved Son it is that God is well pleaſed with us. If we put on Chriſt's righteouſneſs, we put on God's righteouſneſs, and then how can God hate us, any more than he hates his own Son? Nay he loves us, and that with the ſame love wherewith he loves him; for he loves whole Chriſt myſtical, head and members. Let this ſtrengthen our faith, that if Chriſt be ſo altogether lovely in himſelf and to the Father, then we may comfortably come before the Father, clothed with the garments of him our elder brother, and ſo reſt ourſelves on the acceptation of his mediation, that is ſo beloved a Mediator.

Uſe 2.—Again, if Chriſt be ſo lovely, (altogether lovely) then let us labour to be in him, that ſo we may be lovely to God, becauſe he is the firſt amiable thing in the world, in whom we are all lovely. All our loveline's is in Chriſt the beloved.

Uſe 3.—Again, if Chriſt be ſo lovely, here only we have whereupon to ſpend the marrow of our beſt affections. Is it not a pity we ſhould loſe ſo much of our affections as we do upon other things? Chriſt is altogether lovely, why ſhould we doat upon other things ſo much, and ſet up idols in our hearts above Chriſt? Is he altogether lovely, and ſhall not he have altogether our lovely affections, eſpecially when we are commanded, under pain of a curſe, to love the Lord Jeſus? Anathema maranatha to thoſe that love not Chriſt. Let us therefore labour to place all our ſweet affections, that are to be exerciſed upon good, as love, joy, and delight, upon this object, this lovely deſerving object, Chriſt, who is altogether lovely. When we ſuffer a pure

ſtream, as it were, to run through a dirty channel, our affections to run after the things of the world, which are worſe than ourſelves, we loſe our affections and ourſelves. Let therefore the whole ſtream of our affections be carried unto Chriſt. Love him and whatſoever is his; for he being altogether lovely, all that comes from him is lovely, his promiſes, his directions, his counſels, his children, his ſacraments, are all lovely. Whatſoever hath the ſtamp of Chriſt upon it, let us love it, we cannot beſtow our hearts better; to loſe ourſelves in the love of Chriſt, and to forget ourſelves and the love of all, yea to hate all in compariſon of him, and to account all dung and droſs, compared with Chriſt, is the only way to find ourſelves. And indeed we have a better condition in him than in the world or in ourſelves. Severed from him, our condition is vain and will come to nothing; but what we have in him is admirable and everlaſting. We cannot conceive the happineſs which we, poor wretches, are advanced to in Chriſt, and what excellent things abide for us, which come from the love of God to us in Chriſt, who is ſo altogether lovely. Therefore let us labour to kindle in our hearts an affection towards Chriſt all that we can, conſidering that he is thus lovely.

Uſe 4.—And let us make an uſe of trial, whether he be thus lovely to us or no; we may ſee hence whether we love Chriſt or no; we may judge of our love by our eſteem. How do we value Chriſt? What price doth the church ſet on him? "He is the chief of ten thouſand." What place, then, ſhould he have in our hearts? If he be the chief of ten thouſand, let us rather offend ten thouſand than offend him. Let us ſay with David, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" &c. And when the ſoul can ſay to Chriſt, or any that is Chriſt's, (for I ſpeak of him in the latitude of his truths, promiſes, ſacraments, and communion with his children) "What have I in heaven but thee?" &c. then it is in a happy condition. If theſe things have the ſame place in our eſteem, as they have in reſpect of their own worth, then we may ſay truly without hypocriſy, he is altogether lovely to us, that we truly love him.

2. In the next place, are we ready to ſuffer for Chriſt? We ſee the church here endures any thing for Chriſt: ſhe was miſuſed of the watchmen, they ſcorned her, and her vail is taken away; yet, notwithſtanding, ſhe loves Chriſt ſtill. Do we ſtand ready diſpoſed to ſuffer for Chriſt, by the world to be diſgraced and

and cenſured, and yet are we reſolved not to give over, nay do we love Chriſt the more, and ſtick to his truth the faſter? Certainly where the love of Chriſt is, there is a ſpirit of fortitude, as we may ſee in the church here, who is not diſcouraged from Chriſt by any means, he is ſtill the chief of ten thouſand; when ſhe was wronged for ſeeking after him, yet he was altogether lovely: Whereas, on the other hand, you have ſome that for frowns of greatneſs, fear of loſs, or for hope of riſing, will warp their conſcience and do any thing. Where now is love to Chriſt and to religion? He that loves Chriſt loves him the more for his croſs; as the Holy Ghoſt hath recorded of ſome, that they rejoiced that they were thought worthy to ſuffer for Chriſt. So the more we ſuffer for him, the more dear he will be to us.—For indeed he doth preſent himſelf in love and comfort moſt to thoſe that ſuffer for his ſake, therefore their love is increaſed.

3. Again, where love is, there it enlargeth the heart, which being enlarged, enlargeth the tongue alſo. The church hath never enough of commending Chriſt, and of ſetting out his praiſe; the tongue is looſed, becauſe the heart is looſed. Love will alter a man's diſpoſition; as we ſee, in experience, a man baſe of nature, love will make him liberal; he that is tongue-tied, it will make him eloquent. Let a man love Chriſt, and though before he could not ſpeak a word in the commendation of Chriſt, and for a good cauſe; yet, I ſay, if the love of Chriſt be in him, you ſhall have him ſpeak and labour earneſtly in the praiſes of God. This hot affection, this heavenly fire, will ſo moulder and alter him, that he ſhall be clean another man; as we ſee in the church here, after that there was kindled a ſpirit of love in her, ſhe cannot have done with Chriſt, when ſhe had ſpoke what ſhe could, ſhe adds, "he is altogether lovely." Thoſe that cannot ſpeak of Chriſt, or for Chriſt, with large hearts, in defence of good cauſes, (but are tongue-tied and cold in their affections) where is their love? Put any worldly man to a worldly theme that he is exerciſed in, and ſpeaks of daily, he hath wit and words at will; but put him to a theme of piety, you loſe him, he is out of his theme and out of his element. But it is not ſo with thoſe that have ever felt the love of God in Chriſt, they have large affections.—How full is St. Paul! He cannot ſpeak of Chriſt but he is in the height, breadth, length and depth of the love of God in Chriſt, and the knowledge of God above all knowledge. Thus we may diſcern the truth of our love by the expreſſions of it here, as in the church.

4. Again, the church here is never content till ſhe find Chriſt; whatſoever ſhe had, nothing contents her, ſhe wanted her beloved; as we ſee here, ſhe goes up and down inquiſitive after him till ſhe find him. So it is with a chriſtian; if he have loſt (by his own fault) his former communion with Chriſt, he will not reſt nor be ſatisfied, but ſearcheth here and there in the uſe of this and that means; he runs through all God's ordinances and means till he find Chriſt; nothing in the world will content him, neither honour, riches, place, or friends, till he find that which he once enjoyed, but hath now for a ſeaſon loſt, the comfort and aſſurance of God's love in Chriſt.

Now if we can ſit down with other things, and can want Chriſt and the aſſurance of ſalvation, that ſweet report of the ſpirit that we are his, and yet be contented well enough, here is an ill ſign that a man is in an ill condition. The church was not ſo diſpoſed here, ſhe was never quiet, nor gives over her inquiſition and ſpeaking of Chriſt, that by ſpeaking of the object, ſhe might warm her affections, until at the laſt ſhe meets with Chriſt: theſe and the like ſigns there are of the truth of the love of Chriſt.—But where there is a flaming love of Chriſt, there is this degree further, a deſire of the appearance of Chriſt, a deſire of his preſence: For if Chriſt be ſo lovely in his ordinances, if we find ſuch ſweetneſs in the word and ſacraments, in the communion of ſaints, in the motions of the ſpirit; what is the ſweetneſs (think you) which the ſouls in heaven enjoy, where they ſee Chriſt face to face, ſee him as he is? Hereupon the ſpouſe ſaith, "Let him kiſs me with the kiſſes of his mouth." O that I might live in his preſence! this is the deſire of a chriſtian ſoul. When the flame of love is kindled in any ſtrength, O that I might ſee him! and therefore it longs even for death: for as far as a man is ſpiritual, he deſires to be diſſolved, and to be with Chriſt; as Simeon, when he ſaw him, (though in his abaſement) "Now I have enough, let thy ſervant depart in peace, for mine eyes have ſeen thy ſalvation." The preſence of Chriſt, (though it were but in the womb) when Mary the mother of Chriſt came to Elizabeth, it cauſed the babe that was in her womb to ſpring. Such comfort there is in the preſence of Chriſt, (though he be but in the womb) as it made John to ſpring. What then ſhall be his preſence in heaven, how would it make the heart ſpring there, think you? For that which is moſt lovely in Chriſt is to come. Therefore the ſaints that have any degree of grace in the New Teſtament, they are ſet out by this deſcription, they were ſuch as loved the appearing of our Lord

Lord Jeſus Chriſt. How can it be otherwiſe? If they love Chriſt, they love the appearing of Chriſt, wherein we ſhall be made lovely as he is lovely. Here we are not altogether lovely, for we have many dregs of ſin, many infirmities and ſtains. Shall we not then deſire that time wherein, as he is altogether lovely, ſo ſhall we be made a fit ſpouſe for ſo glorious a huſband?

To conclude this point, let us try our affections by the church's affections in this place, whether Chriſt be ſo lovely to us or not. Iſa. l. 3. it is ſaid, there is no beauty in him when we ſhall ſee him, and he was deſpiſed of men; he was ſo in regard of his croſs, and ſufferings, to the eye of the world, and of carnal men. Herod ſcorned him when Pilate ſent him to him, made nobody of him, (as the word in the original is) they looked upon the outſide of Chriſt in the fleſh when he was abaſed. "There was no form nor beauty in him," (ſaith the Holy Ghoſt) that is, to the ſight of carnal men; but thoſe that had the ſight of their ſins with ſpiritual eyes, they could otherwiſe judge of Chriſt. The poor Centurion ſaw an excellency in him, when he ſaid he was not worthy that he ſhould come under his roof. The poor thief ſaw the excellency of Chriſt upon the croſs in thoſe torments, "Lord remember me when thou comeſt into thy kingdom." So thoſe ſouls that were enlightened, that had the ſight of their miſery, and the ſight of God's love in Chriſt, had a high eſteem of Chriſt in his greateſt abaſement. Therefore if we have a mean eſteem of the children of God as contemptible perſons, and of the ordinances of God as mean things, and of the government of Chriſt (ſuch as he hath left in his word) as baſe, it is an argument of a ſinful unworthy diſpoſition in ſuch a ſoul; Chriſt hath never been effectually by his ſpirit, for every thing in him is lovely, even the bittereſt thing of all. There is a majeſty and excellency in all the things of Chriſt. The cenſures of the church are excellent, when they proceed and iſſue forth with judgement as they ſhould do, to deliver ſuch a man over to ſatan, that he may be ſaved in the day of the Lord. Now if the ordinances of Chriſt, the word and ſacraments, and the ſhutting ſinners out of the church, if theſe things be vilified as powerleſs things, it ſhews a degenerate wicked heart, not acquainted with the ways of God. If we have a mean eſteem of men that ſuffer for Chriſt, and ſtand out for him; if we account them ſo and ſo, ſhall we think ourſelves chriſtians in the mean time? When Chriſt is altogether lovely, ſhall they be unlovely that carry the image of Chriſt? Can we love him that begets, and hate them that are begotten of him?

him? Can we love Chriſt and hate chriſtians?—It cannot be.

Now that we may get this affection and eſteem of Chriſt that is ſo lovely, let us labour to make our ſins bitter and loathſome, that Chriſt may be ſweet.

Queſt.—What is the reaſon we ſet no higher a price on Chriſt?

Anſ.—Becauſe we judge not of ourſelves as we are indeed, and want ſpiritual eye-ſalve to ſee into ourſelves rightly.

And let us attend upon the means of ſalvation, to hear the unſearchable riches of Chriſt. What makes any man lovely to us, but when we hear of their riches, beauty, and good intent to us? In the word we are made acquainted with the good intent of Chriſt towards us, the riches of mercy in forgiving our ſins, and the riches of glory prepared for us. The more we hear of him, of his riches and love to us, the more it will inflame our love to Chriſt. Thoſe that live where the ordinances of Chriſt are held forth with life and power, they have more heavenly and enlarged affections than others have, as the experience of chriſtians will teſtify.

Again, if we would eſteem highly of Chriſt, that he may be lovely to us, let us join with company that highly eſteem of Chriſt, and ſuch as are better than ourſelves. What deadens the affections ſo much as carnal worldly company, who have nothing in them but civility, by converſe with them who have diſcourſe of nothing but the world? If a man have heavenly affections, he ſhall quickly dull them, and be in danger to loſe them. They may be converſed with in civil things; but when we would ſet to be heavenly and holy minded, let us converſe with thoſe that are of an heavenly bent; as we ſee here, the daughters of Jeruſalem are won to love Chriſt. By what? By converſing with the church, upon the diſcourſe that the church makes of his excellencies in particular. They begin to aſk, Where is Chriſt? as in the next chapter, and ſo are all brought to the love of Chriſt.

SER-

SERMON EIGHTEENTH.

CANTICLES v. 16.

" *His mouth is most sweet, yea he is altogether lovely; this is my Be-*
" *loved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.*"

CANT. vi. 1. 2.

" *Whither is thy Beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whi-*
" *ther is thy Beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with*
" *thee?*"
" *My Beloved is gone down,*" *&c.*

BY this time the church hath well quit herſelf in that ſafe ſubject, commending her beloved, firſt, in general, and then in particular; ſhe affirms (in effect) there was none like him in general, which ſhe after makes good in all the particulars of her deſcription; now ſhe ſums up all with a kind of ſuperabundant expreſſion: What ſhall I ſay more of him? If that which is ſaid be not enough, then know further, he is altogether lovely. There were no end to go through all his perfections; but look on him wholly, he is altogether lovely, and therefore deſerves my love: ſo that there is no cauſe why you ſhould wonder at the ſtrength of my affections and care to find out this my beloved, and this my friend, O ye daughters of Jeruſalem. Thus we ſee how the pitch of an enlightened ſoul is bent; it aſpires to things ſuitable to itſelf, to Godward, to union and communion with Chriſt, to ſupernatural objects; nothing here below is worthy the name of its beloved. It faſtens not on earthly baſe things; but this is my beloved, and this is my friend, this ſo excellent a perſon, this Jedidiah, this beloved Son, this Judge of all, Lord of all, this chief of ten thouſand. Here the church pitches her affections, which ſhe conceals not as aſhamed thereof; but in a kind of triumphing, boaſting of her choice, ſhe concludes all with a kind of reſolute aſſurance, that the object of this her choice is far beyond all compariſon.

This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jeruſalem.

Which is the cloſing up of her commendations of Chriſt,—" This is my beloved, and this is my friend," &c.; which ſhall only be touched, becauſe we had occaſion to ſpeak thereof before.

She

She calls Chriſt her beloved; although he had withdrawn himſelf in regard of the comfort and communion ſhe had with him him before, yet he is her beloved ſtill.

That which is ſpecially to be ſtood upon is, that the church here doth ſet out not only in parcels, but in general her beloved Chriſt: "This is my beloved." She doth, as it were, boaſt in her beloved. Whence obſerve, a chriſtian ſoul ſeems to glory, as it were, in Chriſt.

"This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jeruſalem." But to unfold more fully this point, there be three or four ends, why the church thus ſtands upon the expreſſing of the excellencies of Chriſt in particular and in general.

1. The one to ſhew that it is moſt juſt that ſhe ſhould love and reſpect him, in whom there is all this to deſerve love, both in himſelf, in regard of his own excellencies; ſo, and in relation to us, in regard of his merits and deſerts.

2. Secondly, to juſtify her large affections before the world and all oppoſites. For the world thinks, What mean theſe who are called chriſtians to haunt the exerciſes of religion, to ſpend ſo much time in good things? They wonder at it, for want of better information. Now the church here, to juſtify her large expreſſions, ſays, "This is my beloved, this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jeruſalem."

3. And not only to juſtify, but likewiſe to glory therein; as you have it, Pſal. xliv. 8. the church there boaſts of God, "I will make my boaſt of thee all the day long:" So that chriſtians may not only juſtify their courſe of life againſt enemies, but, in ſome ſort, boaſt of Chriſt, as Paul oft doth; and he ſhews the reaſon of it, that God hath made Chriſt to us all in all, wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification and redemption, that whoſoever glorieth might glory in the Lord: For is it not a matter of glorying in the church when ſhe hath ſuch a head and ſuch a husband?—"This is my beloved." The wife ſhines in the beams of her husband, therefore this yields matter not only of juſtification but of glorying.

4. And next, in the fourth place, the church is thus large, and ſhuts up all with a repetition, "This is my beloved," to enlarge her own affections, and to feed her own love: for love feeds upon this fuel, (as it were) upon expreſſions and meditations of the

the perſon or thing loved. Love is, as it were, wages of itſelf, the pains it takes is gain to itſelf; to the church here it is an argument pleaſing, ſhe dilates upon a copious theme. I may truly ſay, there is no greater comfort to a chriſtian, nor a readier way to enlarge the affections after Chriſt, than to ſpeak oft of the excellencies of Chriſt, to have his tongue as the pen of a ready writer furniſhed this way, "This is my beloved," &c.

5. In the fifth place, another end of this may be to aggravate her own ſhame; as indeed God's children are much in this argument, that upon their ſecond thoughts of Chriſt's worthineſs, and their withal reflecting upon their own unworthineſs and unkindneſs, they may reliſh Chriſt the better. Therefore the church here, that it might appear to herſelf, for her humiliation, how unkind ſhe had been to ſhut the door againſt Chriſt when he knocked, whereupon he deſervedly did withdraw himſelf, and made her ſeek him ſo long ſorrowing; I tell you, ſays ſhe, what a kind of beloved he is, thus and thus excellent. How did the conſideration of God's kindneſs and love melt David's heart after that horrible ſin in the matter of Uriah! And the ſweet looks of Chriſt upon Peter, that had been ſo unkind, melted him. So here the church, when ſhe conſidered how unkind ſhe had been to Chriſt her beloved, ſo incomparably excellent above other beloveds, to let him ſtand at the door, till his locks were wet with the dew of the night. The conſideration hereof made her aſhamed of herſelf: What! ſo excellent, ſo deſerving a perſon as my beloved is to me, to be uſed of me ſo! What indignity is this! Thus to raiſe up the aggravation of her unkindneſs, no queſtion but the church takes this courſe: for God's children are not as untoward worldlings and hypocrites, afraid to ſearch and to underſtand themſelves; the child of God loves to be well read in his own heart and unworthy ways; therefore he lays all the blame he can upon himſelf every way, he knows he loſeth nothing by this; for there is more mercy in Chriſt than there is ſin in him, and the more ſin abounds in his own feeling, the more grace ſhall abound; he knows the myſtery of God's carriage in this kind. Therefore, for this end, (amongſt the reſt) ſhe ſays, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend," whom I have ſo unkindly uſed.

And the laſt reaſon why the church is thus large, was to draw and wind up the affections of thoſe well-meaning chriſtians that were comers on, who were inquiſitive of the way to Zion.—

O

O ye daughters of Jeruſalem, that you may know that there is ſome cauſe to ſeek after Chriſt more than you have done before, I tell you what an excellent perſon my beloved is—to whet their affections more and more. And we ſee the ſucceſs of this excellent diſcourſe in the beginning of the next chapter: "Whither is thy beloved gone?" &c.

Theſe and the like reaſons there are of the large expreſſions of the church of the excellencies of Chriſt, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jeruſalem." But we will ſingle out of theſe reaſons, for uſe, that which I think fitteſt to make uſe of.

Let us then oft think of the excellencies of Chriſt for this end, to juſtify our endeavours and pains we take in the exerciſes of religion, and to juſtify God's people from the falſe imputations of the world that they lay upon them, as if they were negligent in other matters, and were too much buſied in ſpiritual things. You ſee how large the church is in ſetting out the excellencies of her beloved, and then ſhe ſhuts up all, being able to ſay no more, juſtifying our cauſe, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend;" do you wonder then that I ſeek ſo much after him, or wonder you at chriſtians when they take ſuch pains to keep their communion with Chriſt in a holy walking with, and depending upon God? Theſe are no wonders if you conſider how excellent Chriſt is, what he hath done for us, and what he keeps for us in another world, that he will preſerve us to his heavenly kingdom till he put us into poſſeſſion of that glorious condition that he hath purchaſed. Let the hearts of men dwell upon the conſideration of theſe things, and then you ſhall ſee that God's children are rather to be blamed that they are not more careful, watchful, and induſtrious, than to be taxed that they are ſo much. Our Saviour Chriſt ſaid, Mat. xi. 19. Wiſdom is juſtified of all her children. If you will make good that you are children of wiſdom, you muſt be able to juſtify the wiſdom of God every way, to juſtify your reading, hearing, your communion of ſaints, to juſtify all the exerciſes of religion from an experimental taſte and ſweetneſs of them, as the church doth here, "This is my beloved." What ſays Joſhua? This choice I have made, do you what you will, it matters not, but "I and my houſe will ſerve the Lord." So Paul makes makes a voluntary profeſſion of his affection, Rom. i. 2. "I am not aſhamed of the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt," let the goſpel be entertained in the

the world as it will, and let others think of me as they will, that I am forward in the preaching of it, I am not aſhamed of it, and good reaſon he had not to be aſhamed, for "it is the power of God to ſalvation to all that believe," yea the ſaving power to us, and have not I cauſe to ſtand in the defence of it? and ſo he ſaith, 2 Tim. i. 12. "I know whom I have believed," &c. I am not aſhamed to ſuffer bonds for his ſake. Though the world thought him a mean perſon, I will not be ſcorned out of my faith and religion by ſhallow empty perſons that know not what Chriſt and religion mean. No, "I know whom I have believed, he is able to keep what I have committed to him againſt that day." Let us therefore be able to juſtify, from a judicious apprehenſion, ſweet divine truths. You ſee what juſtifications there are of the church of God; "Wherefore ſhould the heathen ſay, Where is now their God?" and Pſal. xlii. 10. Oh it went to David's heart, when they ſaid, Where is now their God? What is become of his God when he was left in trouble, as the church here, and what doth ſhe anſwer? Doth he let it go with a queſtion? No, ſays he, our God is in heaven, and hath done whatſoever he pleaſed.

And this juſtification of religion you may know by this ſign, it is with the deſertion of all diſcourſes oppoſite to religion whatſoever; he that juſtifies the truth, eſteems meanly of other courſes and diſcourſes. Therefore in the next verſe the church vilifies the idols; our God is in heaven, and doth whatſoever he pleaſeth: the idols are ſilver and gold, the work of men's hands, they have eyes, and ſee not, ears, and hear not; and the more we juſtify Chriſt, the more we will be againſt Antichriſt and his religion, we may know the owning of the one truth by the vilifying of the other. Let us labour therefore to grow to ſuch a convincing knowledge of Chriſt, the good things in him, and the ways of God, as we may be able to ſtand out againſt all oppoſition of the gates of hell whatſoever.

And to this end proceed in the ſtudy of Chriſt, and to a deeper ſearch of him, and of the excellencies and good things in him, that we may ſay as Micah vii. Who is a God like to thee, that pardons ſins and iniquities? and as David, Pſal. cxiii. Who is a God like our God, that humbleth himſelf to behold the things done here below?

And deſire alſo, to this purpoſe, the ſpirit of revelation, that which Paul prays for, Epheſ. i. and chap. iii. that we may know that

that knowledge which is above all knowledge, the heighth, depth, and breadth of God's love in Chriſt. So ſweet is God in the greateſt abaſements of his children, that he leaves ſuch a taſte in the ſoul of a chriſtian, that from thence he may be able to ſay, This is my beloved, when his beloved ſeems not to care for him. When the church ſeemed to be diſreſpected and neglected of Chriſt, yet ſhe ſays, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jeruſalem."

Shall rich men boaſt of their riches? ſhall men that are in favour boaſt of the favour of great perſons? ſhall a man that hath large poſſeſſions boaſt and think himſelf as good and as great as his eſtate is? ſhall a baſe minded worldling be able to boaſt? Why boaſteſt thou thyſelf, O mighty man? Nay you ſhall have malignant ſpirited men boaſt of their malignant deſtructive power, I can do this and that miſchief; ſhall a man boaſt of miſchief, and hath not a chriſtian more cauſe to boaſt in God and in ſalvation? Lord, ſhine on me, ſays David, let me enjoy the light of thy countenance, and that ſhall bring me more joy than they have when their corn and wine encreaſeth: know this, as he goes on in the ſame Pſalm, that God accepts the righteous man.

Therefore let us think we have much more cauſe to boaſt of God and of Chriſt in a ſpiritual manner, than the worldling hath of the world. Is not God and Chriſt our portion, and having Chriſt, have we not all things with Chriſt? ſuppoſe all things be taken from us, if a man have Chriſt, he is rich though he have nothing elſe; if he have all without him, his plenty is, as a Father ſaith, and as it is in truth, beggary. But whoſoever hath Chriſt may thus rejoice with David, "The lot is fallen to me in pleaſant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage." Would ye have more than God in Chriſt, a ring with a diamond very precious in it? Now the daughters of Jeruſalem hearing this large expreſſion of affection, aſk,

Chapter vi. 1.—*Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou faireſt among women? whither is thy beloved turned aſide, that we may ſeek him with thee?*

Here is another queſtion, the firſt which the daughters of Jeruſalem aſk is, "What is thy beloved?" whereupon the church took occaſion to expreſs what her beloved was, upon her

her expreſſion, cloſing up all with this general, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend."

Then the ſecond queſtion is, "Whither is thy beloved gone?" one queſtion begets another, and indeed if this queſtion be well ſatisfied, What is Chriſt above others? this will follow again, Where is he? How ſhall I get him? How ſhall I ſeek him? What is the reaſon this ſecond queſtion is ſeldom made? Whither is he gone? How ſhall I get Chriſt? Becauſe the former queſtion, namely, What is Chriſt? is ſo ſeldom made, for if we did once know what Chriſt is, we would be ſure with the daughters of Jeruſalem, to ask whither is he gone, that we may ſeek him with thee.

We ſee here is a growth in the deſires of the daughters of Jeruſalem, whence we learn that grace, though it be never ſo little proportion at the firſt, is ſtill growing.

From the firſt queſtion, "What is thy beloved?" here is a ſecond upon better information, "Whither is thy beloved gone, that we may ſeek him with thee?" nothing is leſs than grace at the firſt, nothing in the world ſo little in proportion. The kingdom of heaven is compared to a grain of muſtard ſeed, that is, the work of grace in the heart, as well as in the preaching of the goſpel, in the beginning is little. It is true of the work of grace as well as of the word of grace, that it is like a grain of muſtard ſeed at firſt. "What is thy beloved" enquires the church at firſt, but when ſhe hears of the excellency of Chriſt, then "Whither is thy beloved gone?" grace begets grace, there is a connexion and knitting together in religion, good things beget good things; it is a ſtrange thing in religion how great a matter ariſeth of a little beginning. The woman of Samaria had but a ſmall beginning of grace, and yet ſhe preſently drew many of her neighbours to believe in Chriſt.—So Andrew, (John i.) as ſoon as he was converted, finds his brother Simon, and tells him that he had found the Meſſias, and ſo brings him to Chriſt; and Philip as ſoon as he had got a ſpark of faith himſelf, draws alſo Nathaniel to come to Chriſt. Paul ſpeaks of his bonds, how the noiſe of them was in Cæſar's court, and many believed the very report, which howſoever it is not a working cauſe, yet it may be a preparing inducing leading cauſe to ſuch things, from one thing to another, till there follow this change and full converſion. You ſee here the daughters of Jeruſalem growing, therefore let us labour to be under

under good means. Some of the papiſts and others who are ill affected and grounded in that point, think that the efficacy of grace is, as we call it, from the congruity, fitneſs, and proportion of the means to the heart and will of man, and thereupon God converts one and not another, becauſe there is a congruous and fit offering of means to him, when he is fitly diſpoſed, and another is not fitly diſpoſed, therefore there follows not upon it effectual calling, ſo that the virtue of the means offered depends upon ſuitableneſs and fitneſs in the party to whom the means are offered, and not upon the power and bleſſing of God. Verily this is plauſible, and goes down very roundly with many weak perſons, but this is a falſe and groſs error, for unleſs God by his holy ſpirit do work by the means, no planting and watering will bring any increaſe, or change the heart and mind; though there were greater means in Chriſt's time when he wrought theſe miracles, than any time before, yet all thoſe could not convert that froward generation; and it was Moſes' complaint in the wilderneſs, where they had abundance of means, God hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to ſee, and ears to hear, untill this day. When a man is planted under good means, and frequents them, then ordinarily it pleaſeth God by the inward workings of his own powerful ſpirit, to work great matters; and thoſe that keep out of God's reach, that will not come into places where they may hear good things, there is no hope of them; though there be many ill fiſh in the net, yet there is no hope to catch them that are without the net. So thoſe that are kept out of all opportunities and occaſions whereby God's ſpirit may work upon them, there is no hope of them.

Let us learn this heavenly wiſdom to advantage ourſelves this way, by improving all good opportunities whatſoever whereby we may learn, for God works by outward means; good company and good diſcourſe breed excellent thoughts. As therefore we love our ſouls, take all advantages wherein the ſpirit of God works, we ſhall find incredible fruit thereof, more than we would believe. But to come to the queſtion.

See here firſt of all in this queſtion, the bleſſed ſucceſs of the church's enquiry after Chriſt in the daughters of Jeruſalem; after they heard the large explications of the excellencies of Chriſt, eſpecially from the church, whom they had a good opinion of, for they call her the faireſt among women.

And ſeeing likewiſe the confidence of the church, ſhe ſtands to

to it, "This is my beloved," yea alſo eagerneſs in the church to ſeek after him, they would ſeek him with her; ſo that where theſe meet. a large unfolding of the truth of God, and that by perſons that are known to be good, well accepted and thought of, and where there is a large demonſtration of real affection, and the things are ſpoken with confidence, as knowing what they ſay, the word I ſay, ſo managed, is never without wondrous ſucceſs.

1. For in the courſe of reaſon, what can I have to ſay, conſidering the perſon who ſpeaks is an excellent perſon, he is wiſer and holier than I, he takes to heart theſe things, and ſhall not I affect that which thoſe that have better parts and graces do?

2. Then withal, I ſee not only excellent perſons do it, but I ſee how earneſt they are, ſurely there is ſome matter in it, for perſons ſo holy, ſo wiſe, and gracious, to be ſo earneſt, ſurely either they are to blame, or I am too dull and too dead, but I have moſt cauſe to ſuſpect myſelf.

3. And to ſee them carried with a ſpirit of confidence, as if they were well enough adviſed when they deliver this, "This is my beloved," in particular, and then to ſhut up all in general, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend;" I ſay, when there is grace and life in the heart, and earneſtneſs with confidence, this together with the explication of the heavenly excellencies of Chriſt and of religion, hath admirable ſucceſs, as here in the church, the faireſt among women, the daughters of Jeruſalem, ſeeing the church was ſo earneſt, confident, and large in the explication of the excellencies of Chriſt, ſee how it works, it draws out this queſtion with reſolution, they join with the church in ſeeking Chriſt; "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou faireſt among women? whither is thy beloved turned aſide, that we may ſeek him with thee?" Where by the way obſerve, as the church before doubles it, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend;" ſo they anſwer with a double queſtion, "Whither is thy beloved gone? whither is he turned aſide, O thou faireſt among women," &c. From this appellation, note, If we would be happy inſtruments to convert others, being converted ourſelves, let us labour to be ſuch as the world may think to be good and gracious. "O thou faireſt among women," fair in the robes of Chriſt, taken out of his wardrobe. All the beauty and ornament that the church hath, ſhe hath from Chriſt. Let us labour to be ſuch as the world may think we are good perſons. We

ſay of phyſicians, when the patient hath a good opinion of them, the cure is half wrought; ſo the doctrine is half perſuaded, when there is a good opinion of the ſpeaker.

Again, labour to be earneſt. If we would kindle others, we muſt be warmed ourſelves; if we would make others weep, we muſt weep ourſelves. Naturaliſts could obſerve this, the church ſpake this with large expreſſions, indeed more than can be expreſſed. Let us labour to be deeply affected with what we ſpeak, and ſpeak with confidence as if we knew what we ſpoke, as the apoſtle John doth in the beginning of his epiſtle, to bring others to be better perſuaded of his doctrine; he affirmeth that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with theſe our eyes, which we have looked upon, and theſe hands of ours have handled, of the word of life he delivered to them.

For when we are confident from ſpiritual experience, it is wonderful how we ſhall be inſtruments of God to gain upon others. So Peter, we followed not (ſays he) deceivable fables, when we opened unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but with our eyes we ſaw his majeſty.

Do not think it belongs only to the miniſtry; there is an art of converſion that belongs to every one that is a grown chriſtian to win others.

Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women?

The next obſervation out of the words (becauſe it is eſpecial) which works upon the daughters of Jeruſalem, is from the large explication of Chriſt. That which moſt of all ſtirs up holy affections to ſearch after Chriſt, is the large explication of his excellencies. Then be in love with the miniſtry of the goſpel, and the communion of ſaints, who have their tongues and their hearts taught of God to ſpeak excellently; their tongues are as refined ſilver, their hearts are enriched to increaſe the communion of ſaints. Mark this one excellency of that excellent ordinance of God in Chriſt, whereof Paul ſaith, Epheſ. iii. "To me is committed this excellent office to lay open the unſearchable riches of Chriſt." Such riches as may draw you to wonder; ſuch as eye hath never ſeen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive, and ſo to draw the affections of people after them.

And

And becauſe it is the ſpecial office of the miniſtry to lay him open, to hold up the tapeſtry, to unfold the hidden myſteries of Chriſt, let us labour therefore to be always ſpeaking ſomewhat about Chriſt or tending that way; when we ſpeak of the law, let it drive us to Chriſt; when of moral duties, to teach us to walk worthy of Chriſt. Chriſt, or ſomewhat tending to Chriſt, ſhould be our theme and mark to aim at.

Therefore what ſhall we judge of thoſe that are hinderers of this glorious ordinance of Chriſt in the goſpel? they are enemies of converſion, and of the calling of God's people, enemies of their comfort: and what ſhall we think of thoſe wretched and miſerable creatures, that like Cain are vagabonds, who wander, and will not ſubmit themſelves to this bleſſed opportunity of hearing the excellencies of Chriſt, which might draw their hearts to him: we are made for ever, if Chriſt and we be one; if we have all the world without him, it is nothing, but if we have nothing in the world but Chriſt, we are happy. Oh happy then when this match is made between Chriſt and the ſoul, the friends of the bride and of Chriſt, they laying open the unſearchable riches of Chriſt to the ſpouſe, draw the affections, work faith, and ſo bring the bride and the bridegroom together.

Thus far of the queſtion, now we have the church's anſwer to the daughters of Jeruſalem.

My beloved is gone into his garden, to the beds of ſpices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lillies.

The queſtion was not for a bare ſatisfaction, but from a deſire the church had to ſeek Chriſt; whither is thy beloved gone, that we may ſeek him? It was not a curious queſtion, but a queſtion of inquiry, tending to practice. Many are inquiſitive, but when they know another man's meaning, it is all they deſire: now I know your meaning, will they ſay, but I mean not to follow your counſel. The daughters of Jeruſalem had a more ſincere intention. "O thou faireſt among women, whither is thy beloved turned aſide, that we may ſeek him with thee?" whereunto the church anſwered,

My beloved is gone into his garden, to the beds of ſpices, to feed in the gardens.

Where we ſee, the church is not ſqueamiſh, but directly anſwers to the queſtion, for there is no envy in ſpiritual things,

becauſe they may be divided in ſolidum, one may have as much as another, and all alike. Envy is not in thoſe things that are not diviſible in other things, the more one hath, another hath the leſs. But there is no envy in grace and glory, becauſe all may ſhare alike; therefore here is no envy in the anſwer; as if ſhe denied the daughters of Jeruſalem the enjoying of her beloved; no, if you will know, ſays ſhe, I will tell you directly whither my beloved is gone.

My beloved is gone into his garden, to the bed of ſpices, &c.

God hath two gardens, the univerſal church is his garden, and every particular church are gardens, and beds of ſpices, in regard that many chriſtians are ſown there that Chriſt's ſoul delights in, as in ſweet ſpices. This was ſpoken of before at large in chapter v. 1. why the church is called a garden, being a ſevered place from the waſte: the church is ſevered from the wilderneſs of the world in God's care and love, likewiſe he tends and weeds his church and garden: as for the waſte of the world, he is content the wilderneſs ſhould have barren plants: but he will not endure ſuch in his garden; therefore thoſe that give themſelves liberty to be naught in the church of God, he will have a time to root them out: trees that are not for fruit, ſhall be for the fire, and above all other trees their doom ſhall be the heavieſt that grow in God's garden without fruit, that fig-tree ſhall be curſed.

Men are pleaſed with anſwering the bill of accuſation againſt them thus, Are we not baptized? and do we not come to church? &c. what do you make of us? yet they are abominable ſwearers, and filthy in their lives. To ſuch I ſay, the more God hath lifted you up, and honoured you in the uſe of means, the more juſt your damnation will be, if you bring forth briars and brambles, the grapes of Sodom, and the vine of Gomorrah: heavy will the doom be of many that live in the church's boſom, to whom it had been better to have been born in America, in Turkey, or in the moſt barbarous parts of the world: they have a heavy account to make, that have been ſuch ill proficients under abundance of means; therefore it ought to be taken to heart.

My beloved is gone into his garden, to the beds of ſpices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

That is, having firſt planted them lillies here, to gather them, and

and to tranſport them out of the garden here, to the garden in heaven, where there ſhall be nothing but lillies. For the church of God hath two gardens or paradiſes ſince the firſt paradiſe (whereof that was a reſemblence) the paradiſe of the church, and the paradiſe of heaven. As Chriſt ſaith to the good thief, "this day thou ſhalt be with me in paradiſe." So thoſe that are good plants in the paradiſe of the church, they ſhall be glorious plants in the paradiſe of heaven: We muſt not always be here, we ſhall change our ſoil, and be taken into heaven: "He is gone into his garden to gather lillies."

Chriſtians are compared to lillies for their purity and whiteneſs, unſpotted in juſtification, and for their endeavours in ſanctity and holineſs, wherein at length they ſhall be wholly unſpotted, it is the end, Epheſ. i. 4. they are choſen to, to be holy without blame before him in love. God and Chriſt look upon them without blame, not as they are here defiled and ſpotted, but as they intend by little and little to purge and purify themſelves by the ſpirit that is in them, that they may be altogether without blame. They are lillies, being cloathed with the white garments of Chriſt's righteouſneſs, not having a natural whiteneſs and purity: the whiteneſs and purity of God's children is borrowed; all their beauty and garments are taken out of another's wardrobe, the church is all glorious within; but ſhe borrows her glory, as the moon borrows all her light from the ſun: the church's excellency is borrowed, it is her own only by gift, but being once her own, it is her own for ever.

The church before was likened to a garden culled out, an Eden, a Paradiſe. Now there you know were four ſtreams, ſweet and goodly rivers, which watered paradiſe, the heads of which rivers were without it. So the church of God, her graces are her own; that is, the ſpirit of God comes through her nature, purgeth and purifieth it; but the ſpring of thoſe graces (as in Paradiſe) is out of herſelf. And then the lilly is a tall goodly plant, therefore the church is compared to them. Other men are compared to thorns, not only for a noxious hurtful quality in them, but for their baſeneſs likewiſe. What are thorns good for, but to cumber the ground, to eat out the heart of it, to hide ſnakes, and for the fire? Wicked men are not lillies but thorns, they are baſe mean perſons. Antiochus is ſaid to be a vile perſon though he were a king, becauſe he was a naughty man. Wicked men, though they be never ſo great, being void of the grace of

God, are vile perſons. Though we muſt reſpect them in regard of their places, yet as they are in their qualifications, they are vile and baſe thorns. But the church is not ſo; but as a lilly among thorns, that is, among vile and abominable perſons.

Uſe 1.—The uſe is to comfort God's children. They have an excellency and glory in them, which howſoever it is not from them, yet it is theirs by gift, and eternally theirs. Therefore let them comfort themſelves againſt all the cenſures of ſinful perſons that labour to trample them under foot, and think baſely and meanly of them, as of the off-ſcouring of the world. Let the unworthy world think of them as they will, they are lillies in God's eſteem, and are ſo indeed; glorious perſons that have the ſpirit of glory reſting upon them, and whom the world is not worthy of, though their glory be within. Therefore let us glory in it, that God vouchſafeth ſaving grace to us above any other privilege.

Uſe 2.—Again, it comforts us in all our wants whatſoever, that God will take care for us. Chriſt uſeth this argument,—God, ſaith he, clotheth the lillies of the field with an excellent beauty, he cares even for the meaneſt plants, and will he not take care for you, "O ye of little faith?" Doth he care for lillies that are to-day, and to-morrow are caſt into the oven, and ſhall he not care for the lillies of paradiſe, the living lillies, thoſe holy reaſonable lillies? Undoubtedly he will. Our Saviour Chriſt's reaſon is undeniable; he that puts ſuch a beauty upon the poor plants that flouriſh to-day in the morning, and wither before night; he that puts ſuch a beauty upon the graſs of the field, will he not put more excellency upon his children? will he not provide for them, feed them? Undoubtedly he will.—Thus we have ſhewed why God's children in the church of God are compared to lillies.

To gather lillies.

Chriſt is ſaid to gather theſe lillies; that is, he will gather them together. Chriſt will not have his lillies alone ſcattered, he leaves them oft alone for a while, yet he will gather them to congregations and churches. The name of a church, in the original, is Eccleſia, it is nothing but a company gathered out of the world. Do we think that we are lillies by nature? No, we are thorns and briers; God makes us lillies, and then gathers us to other lillies, that one may ſtrengthen another. The ſpirit of

of God in his children is not a ſpirit of ſeparation of chriſtians from chriſtians; but a ſpirit of ſeparation from the waſte wild wilderneſs of the world; as we ſay of fire, *Congregat homogenea & diſgregat heterogenea*, it congregates all homogenial things, as gold, which it gathers, but diſgregates heterogenial things, conſumeth droſs: So the ſpirit of God ſevers thorns and gathers lillies, gathers chriſtians together in the church, and will gather them for ever in heaven.

Thus we ſee the anſwer of the church to the daughters of Jeruſalem what it was, with the occaſion thereof: the queſtion of the daughters of Jeruſalem, "Whither is thy beloved gone?"—So that the church was beholden to the daughters of Jeruſalem for miniſtring ſuch a queſtion, to give her occaſion to know better what her beloved was. Indeed we many times gain by weaker chriſtians; good queſtions, though from weak ones, miniſter ſuitable anſwers. It is a Greek proverb, that doubting begets plenty and abundance; for doubting at the firſt begets reſolution at laſt. O that we could take occaſion, hence, to think of this, what excellent virtue is in the communion of ſaints, when they meet about heavenly exerciſes, what a bleſſing follows, when tho' at the entry their affections may be flat and dull, yet they part not ſo. Chriſt heats and inflames their hearts to do much good to one another. O thoſe that ſhall for ever live together in heaven, ſhould they not delight to live more together on earth?

SERMON NINETEENTH.

CANTICLES vi. 2.

"*I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine; he feedeth among the lillies.*"

THESE words are a kind of triumphant acclamation upon all the former paſſages, as it were the foot of the Song; for when the church had ſpoken formerly of her ill dealing with Chriſt, and how he thereupon abſented himſelf from her, with many other paſſages, ſhe ſhuts up at laſt with this, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."

Now ſhe begins to feel ſome comfort from Chriſt, who had e-

ſtranged himſelf from her. O (ſaith ſhe) notwithſtanding all my ſufferings, deſertions, croſſes, and the like, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." Words expreſſing the wondrous comfort, joy, and contentment the church now had in Chriſt, having her heart inflamed with love unto him, upon his manifeſting of himſelf to her ſoul. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine, he feedeth among the lillies." There is a mutual intercourſe and viciſſitude of claiming intereſt betwixt Chriſt and his church; I am Chriſt's, and Chriſt is mine; I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.

From the dependence and order of the words coming in after a deſertion for a while, obſerve, that Chriſt will not be long from his church. The ſpiritual deſertions, (forſakings as we uſe to call them) howſoever they be very irkſome to the church, (that loves communion with Chriſt) and to a beloved ſoul, to be deprived of the ſenſe of her beloved; yet, notwithſtanding, they are but ſhort, Chriſt will not be long from his church; his love, and her deſire will not let him, they offer violence. Why art thou abſent, (ſay they) why art thou ſo far off, and hideſt thyſelf?—Joſeph may conceal himſelf for a ſpace, but he will have much ado ſo to hold long, to be ſtraitened to his brethren, paſſion will break out. So Chriſt may ſeem hard to be intreated, and to croſs his own ſweet diſpoſition, as to the woman of Canaan, but he will not long keep at this diſtance, he is ſoon overcome: "O woman, great is thy faith, have what thou wilt." When ſhe ſtrove with him a little, (as faith is a ſtriving grace) ſee how ſhe did win upon him. So the angel and Jacob may ſtrive for a while, but Jacob at the length proves Iſrael, he prevails with God. So it is with the chriſtian ſoul and Chriſt, howſoever there be deſertion (for cauſes before mentioned) becauſe the church was negligent, (as we hear) and partly for the time to come, that Chriſt, by his eſtrangement, might ſweeten his coming again. Howſoever there may be ſtrangeneſs for a time, yet Chriſt will return again to his ſpouſe.

Uſe 1.—The uſe ſhould be, not only for comfort, to ſtay us in ſuch times, but to teach us likewiſe to wait, and never to give over. If the church had given over here, ſhe had not had ſuch gracious manifeſtations of Chriſt to her. Learn hence, therefore, this uſe, to wait God's leiſure. God will wait to do good to them that wait on him. If we wait his leiſure, he will wait an opportunity of doing good to us. When God ſeems not to

anſwer

anſwer our prayers, let us yet wait, we ſhall not loſe by our tarrying, he will wait to do us good.

In the next place obſerve, after this temporary deſertion, Chriſt viſits his church with more abundant comfort than ever before. Now the church cannot hold, "My beloved is mine, and I am his;" and Chriſt cannot hold, but falls into a large commendation of his ſpouſe back again: as ſhe was large in his commendations, ſo he is large in hers, and more large, he will have the laſt word. Therefore learn by this experience, that all things work together for the beſt to them that love God. All things! What! evil? Ay, evil. Why even ſin turns to their humiliation, yea and deſertion (thoſe ſpiritual ills) turn to their good: For Chriſt ſeems to forſake for a while, that he may come after with more abundance of comfort, when once he hath enlarged the ſoul before with a ſpacious deſire of his coming, to ſay, O that he would come. When the ſoul is thus ſtretched with deſire in the ſenſe of want, then he fills it again till it burſt forth, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." It was a good experiment of Bernard, an holy man in ill times, *tibi accidit*, &c.; ſpeaking of Chriſt's dealing with his church, he comes and he goeth away for thy good; he comes for thy good, to comfort thee, after which, if thou be not careful to maintain communion with him, then he goeth away for thy good, to correct thy error, and to enlarge thy deſire of him again; to teach thee to lay ſure and faſter hold upon him, when thou haſt him, not to let him go again.

If you would ſee a parallel place to this, look in Cant. iii. where there is the like caſe of the ſpouſe and Chriſt: "By night, on my bed, I ſought him." The church ſought Chriſt not only by day but by night: "I ſought him whom my ſoul loved."—Though ſhe wanted him, yet her ſoul loved him conſtantly. Tho' a chriſtian's ſoul have not preſent communion with Chriſt, yet he may truly ſay, my ſoul loves him, becauſe ſhe ſeeks him diligently and conſtantly in the uſe of all the means. So we ſee the church, before my text, calls him my beloved ſtill, though ſhe wanted communion with him: Well, ſhe goes on, "I ſought him, but I found him not." Would the church give over there? No: Then ſhe riſeth and goeth about the city, and about the ſtreets, and "ſeeks him whom her ſoul loved;" ſeeks him, and will not give over. So I ſought him, but I wanted the iſſue of my ſeeking, I found him not. What comes upon that? The watchmen go about the city and find her, of whom (when by her own

own ſeeking ſhe could not find Chriſt) ſhe enquires, "Saw you him whom my ſoul loveth?" She enquires of the watchmen, the guides of God's people, who could not ſatisfy her fully, ſhe could not find her beloved. Yet what doth ſhe? She ſhews, (verſe 4.) it was but a little that ſhe ſtayed. After ſhe had uſed all means, private and public, in her bed, out of her bed, by the watchmen and others; yet (ſaith ſhe) it was but a little that I was paſt from them: ſhe had not an anſwer preſently, though the watchmen gave her ſome good counſel, it was not preſently, yet not long after. Chriſt will exerciſe us a while with waiting. "It was but a little that I paſſed from them, but I found him whom my ſoul loved." After all our ſeeking there muſt be waiting, and then we ſhall find him whom our ſoul loveth.—Perhaps we have uſed all means, private and public, and yet find not that comfort we look for. O but wait a while, God hath a long time waited for thee; be thou content to wait a while for him, we ſhall not loſe by it: For it follows in the next verſe, after ſhe had found him whom her ſoul loved, "I held him, I would not let him go." So this is the iſſue of deſertions, they ſtir up diligence and ſearching in the uſe of means private and public, and exerciſe patience to wait God's leiſure, who will not ſuffer a gracious ſoul to fail of its expectation; at length he will fulfil the deſires of them that fear him; and this comes of their patience, grace grows greater and ſtronger. "I held him, and would not let him go until I had brought him unto my mother's houſe." Thus you ſee how the ſpirit expreſſeth the ſame truth in another ſtate of the church: compare place with place. To go on:

I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.

The words, themſelves, are a paſſionate expreſſion of long looked for conſolation. Affections have eloquence of their own beyond words; fear hath a proper expreſſion; love vents itſelf in broken words and ſighs, delighting in a peculiar eloquence ſuitable to the height and pitch of the affection, that no words can reach unto: So that here is more in the words breathed from ſuch an inflamed heart than in ordinary conſtruction can be picked out; ("I am my beloved's," &c.) coming from a full and large heart, expreſſing the union and communion between Chriſt and the church, (eſpecially after a deſertion) "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."

Firſt, I ſay, the union, viz. the union of perſons, which is before

fore all comfort and communion of graces; "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." Chriſt's perſon is ours, and our perſons are his. For as it is in marriage, if the perſon of the huſband be not the wife's, his goods are not hers, nor his titles of honour; for theſe come all to her, becauſe his perſon is hers, he having paſſed over the right of his own body and of his perſon to his wife, as ſhe hath paſſed over all the right of herſelf to her husband. So it is in this myſtical marriage, that which intitles us to communion of graces is union of perſons between Chriſt and his church; "I am my beloved's, and my beloved himſelf is mine." And indeed nothing elſe will content a chriſtian's heart; he would not care ſo much for heaven itſelf, if he had not Chriſt there. The ſacraments, word, and comforts, why doth he eſteem them? As they come from Chriſt, and as they lead to Chriſt.—It is but an adulterous and baſe affection to love any thing ſeparate from Chriſt.

Now from this union of perſons comes a communion of all other things whatſoever. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." If Chriſt himſelf be mine, then all is mine; what he hath done, what he hath ſuffered, is mine; the benefit of all is mine; what he hath is mine; his prerogatives and privileges to be the Son of God, and heir of heaven, and the like, all is mine. Why, himſelf is mine, union is the foundation of communion. So it is here with the church, "I am my beloved's;" my perſon is his, my life is his, to glorify him, and to lay it down when he will; my goods are his, my reputation his, I am content to ſacrifice all for him, I am his, all mine is his: So you ſee there is union and communion mutually between Chriſt and his church. The original and ſpring hereof is Chriſt's uniting and communicating himſelf to his church firſt; the ſpring begins to the ſtream. What hath the ſtream or ciſtern in it, but what is had from the ſpring? Firſt we love him, becauſe he loved us firſt. It was a true ſpeech of Auguſtine, *Quicquid bonum*, &c. Whatſoever is good in the world or lovely, it is either God or from God; it is either Chriſt or from Chriſt, he begins it. It is ſaid in nature, love deſcends, the father and the mother love the child before the child can love them. Love, indeed, is of a fiery nature, only here is the diſſimilitude, fire aſcends, love deſcends; it is ſtronger deſcending from the greater to the leſs, than aſcending up from the meaner to the greater: And that for this, amongſt other reaſons, becauſe the greater perſon looks upon the leſſer as a piece of himſelf, ſees himſelf in it, the father

ther and mother ſee themſelves in their child: So God loves us more than we can love him, becauſe he ſees his image in us. Neither is there only a priority of order, he loves us firſt, and then we love him; but alſo of cauſality, he is the cauſe of our love, not by way of motive only he loves us, and therefore from an ingenuous ſpirit we muſt love him again; but he gives us his ſpirit, circumciſeth our hearts to love him; for all the motives or moral perſuaſions in the world, without the ſpirit, cannot make us love. We are taught of God to love one another, our brethren whom we ſee daily, (ſaith Paul) much more need we be taught to love him whom we never ſaw, ſo that his love kindles ours by way of reflection.

In the new covenant, God works both parts, his own and our parts too, our love to him, our fear of him, our faith in him, he works all, even as he ſhews his own love to us. If God love us thus, what muſt we do? Meditate upon his love, let our hearts be warmed with the conſideration of it, let us bring them to that fire of his love, and then they will wax hot within us; and beg the ſpirit; Lord, thou haſt promiſed to give thy ſpirit to them that aſk it, and to circumciſe our hearts to love thee and to love one another, give thy holy ſpirit as thou haſt promiſed.

In a word, theſe words, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine," to join them both together, they imply, 1. a mutual propriety. Chriſt hath a propriety in me, and I in Chriſt, peculiar propriety; Chriſt is mine, ſo as I have none in the world ſo much mine; whom have I in heaven but Chriſt? and what is there in earth in compariſon of him? he is mine, and mine in a peculiar manner, and I am his in a peculiar manner, there is propriety with peculiarity.

2. Then, again, theſe words, "I am his," imply mutual love; all is mutual in them, mutual propriety, mutual peculiarity, and mutual love. I love Chriſt ſo as I love nothing elſe, there is nothing above him in my heart, as Chriſt loves me more than any thing elſe, (ſaith the church) and every chriſtian: he loves all, and gives outward benefits to all, but to me hath given himſelf, ſo love I him. As the huſband loves all in the family, his cattle and his ſervants, but he gives himſelf to his ſpouſe: So Chriſt is mine, himſelf is mine, and myſelf am Chriſt's; he hath my ſoul, my affections, my body, and all; he hath a propriety in me, and a peculiarity in me; he hath my affection and love to the uttermoſt, as I have his, for there is an intercourſe in theſe words.

3. Then,

3. Then, again, they imply mutual familiarity. Chriſt is familiar to my ſoul, and I to Chriſt; he diſcovers himſelf to me in the ſecret of his love, and I diſcover myſelf to him in prayer and meditation, opening my ſoul to him upon all occaſions. God's children have a ſpirit of prayer, which is a ſpirit of fellowſhip, and talks (as it were) to God in Chriſt. It is the language of a new born chriſtian, he cries to his Father; there is a kind of familiarity between him and his God in Chriſt, who gives the entrance and acceſs to God; ſo that where there is not a kind of familiarity in prayer, and opening of the ſoul to Chriſt upon all occaſions, there is not this holy communion. Thoſe that are not given to prayer, they cannot, in truth, ſpeak theſe words as the church doth here, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine," for they imply ſweet familiarity.

4. Then, again, they imply mutual likeneſs one to another.—He is mine, and I am his. The one is a glaſs to the other. Chriſt ſees himſelf in me, I ſee myſelf in him: For this is the iſſue of ſpiritual love, eſpecially that it breeds likeneſs and reſemblance of the party loved in the ſoul that loveth; for love frameth the ſoul to the likeneſs of the party loved. I am his, I reſemble him; I am his, I have given myſelf to him; I carry his picture and reſemblance in my ſoul; for they are words of mutual conformity. Chriſt, out of love, became like me in all things, wherein I am not like the devil, (that is, ſin excepted) if he became like me, taking my nature that I might be near him in the fellowſhip of grace, "My beloved is mine," I will be as like him as poſſibly I can. I am his, every chriſtian carries a character of Chriſt's diſpoſition as far as weakneſs will ſuffer, you may know Chriſt in every chriſtian, for as the king's coin carries the ſtamp of the king, Cæſar's coin bears Cæſar's ſuperſcription, ſo every chriſtian is God's coin, and he ſets his own ſtamp upon it; if we be Chriſt's, there is a mutual conformity betwixt him and us.

Now where you ſee a malicious, unclean, worldly ſpirit, know that it is the ſtamp of the devil, none of Chriſt's; he that hath not the ſpirit of God is none of his; now where the ſpirit of Chriſt is, it ſtamps Chriſt's likeneſs upon the ſoul; therefore we are exhorted, Phil. ii. 5. to be like minded with Chriſt.

Again, theſe words, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine", imply a mutual care that Chriſt and the ſoul have one of the good of another, of each others honour and reputation; as Chriſt hath a care of our good: ſo a chriſtian ſoul (if it can ſay with

with truth and ſincerity, I am Chriſt's) it muſt needs have a care for Chriſt's good, of his children, religion, and truth. What? will ſuch a ſoul ſay, ſhall Chriſt care for my body, ſoul, and ſalvation, and ſtoop to come from heaven to ſave me, and ſhall I have no care for him and his glory? he hath left his truth and his church behind him, and ſhall not I defend this truth, and ſtand for the poor church to the utmoſt of my power, againſt all contrary power? ſhall not I ſtand for religion? ſhall it be all one to me what opinions are held? ſhall I pretend he cares for me, and ſhall not I care for that which I ſhould care for? Is it not an honour to me that he hath truſted me to care for any thing, that he will be honoured by my care? Beloved, it is an honour for us that we may ſpeak a good word for religion, for Chriſt's cauſe, for his church, againſt maligners and oppoſers, and we ſhall know one day that Chriſt will be a rewarder of every good word: where this is ſaid in ſincerity, that Chriſt is mine, and I am Chriſt's, there will be this mutual care.

Likewiſe there is implied a mutual complacency in theſe words; by a complacency, I mean a reſting contented love. Chriſt hath a complacency and reſting in the church, and the church hath a ſweet reſting contentment in Chriſt; Chriſt in us, and we in him. A true chriſtian ſoul that hath yielded up its conſent to Chriſt, when it is barren in the world, vexed and troubled, can rely on this, I have yet a loving huſband, yet I have Chriſt.

Let this put us upon a ſearch into ourſelves, what we retire to when we meet with afflictions; thoſe that have brutiſh and beaſtly ſouls, retire to carnal contentments, to good fellowſhip, forget, beſot, and fly away from themſelves, their own conſciences, and thought of their own trouble, whereas a ſoul that hath any acquaintance with God in Chriſt, or any intereſt in Chriſt, ſo that it may ſay, that Chriſt is mine and I am Chriſt's, there will be contentment and reſt in ſuch a ſoul, whatſoever it meets with in the world.

The laſt thing implied is courage, a branch of the former. Say all againſt it what they can, faith the reſolved ſoul, I will be Chriſt's: here is courage with reſolution. Agreeable hereto is that, Iſa. xliv. 5. "One ſhall ſay, I am the Lord's; and another ſhall call himſelf by the name of Jacob; another ſhall ſubſcribe and ſirname himſelf by the name of Iſrael." Where there is not this reſolution in good cauſes, there is not the ſpirit of Chriſt, there

there is no intereſt in Chriſt. It is but a deluſion and ſelf-flattery to ſay I am Chriſt's, when there is not reſolution to ſtand to Chriſt. Theſe words are the expreſſion of a reſolved heart, I am and I will be Chriſt's, I am not aſhamed of my bargain, of the conſent I have given him, I am and I will be his. You have the like in Micah iv. 5. "All people will walk every one in the name of his god, they will reſolve on that, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever." So that where theſe words are ſpoken in truth, that I am Chriſt's, there is neceſſarily implied, I will own him and his cauſe for ever and ever. He hath married me for ever and ever, therefore if I hope to have intereſt in him for comfort for ever and ever, I muſt be ſure to yield myſelf to him for ever and ever, and ſtand for his cauſe in all oppoſitions, againſt all enemies whatſoever. Theſe and ſuch like places in ſcripture run parallel with this in the text, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine," not only holding in the perſon, but in the cauſe of Chriſt. Every man hopes his God will ſtand for him againſt the devil, who accuſeth us daily. If we will have Chriſt to ſtand for us, and to be an advocate to plead our cauſe (as he doth) in heaven, we muſt reſolve to ſtand for him againſt all enemies, hereticks, ſchiſmaticks, perſecutors whatſoever, that we will walk in the name of our God for ever and ever.

Queſt.—But when the caſe is not thus with us, and that neither we can feel comfort from Chriſt, nor have this aſſurance of his love to us, what ſhould we judge of ſuch?

Anſ.—We ſhould not wonder to ſee poor ſouls diſtempered when they are in ſpiritual deſertions, conſidering how the ſpouſe cannot endure the abſence of Chriſt, it is out of love; therefore in the deepeſt plunge ſhe hath this in her mouth, "My beloved." Therefore let us not judge amiſs of ourſelves or others, when we are impatient in this kind.

But for a more full anſwer, in want of feeling of the love of Chriſt in regard of that meaſure we would (for there is never altogether a want of feeling) there is ſo much as keeps from deſpair always; yet if we carry a conſtant love towards him, mourn to him and ſeek after him, as the church here; if the deſire of our ſouls be after him, that we ſeek after him in the uſe of means, and are willing to ſpeak of him, as the church here, feel or feel not we are his, and he will at length diſcover himſelf to us. Let ſuch drooping ſpirits conſider, that as he will not be long from us, nor wholly; ſo it ſhall not be for our diſadvantage that he retires

retires at all; his abſence, at length, will end in a ſweet diſcovery of himſelf more abundantly than before. He abſents himſelf for our good, to make us more humble and watchful for the time to come, more pitiful to others, more to prize our former condition, to juſtify the ways of God more ſtrictly, to walk with him, to regain that ſweet communion which, by our negligence and ſecurity, we loſt. When we are thus prepared by his abſence, there enſues a more ſatisfying diſcovery of himſelf than ever before.

But when is the time that he comes? Compare this with the former chapter, he comes after long waiting for him. The church waited for him, and waited in the uſe of all means; ſhe runs to the watchmen, and then enquires after him of the daughters of Jeruſalem; after this ſhe finds him. After we have waited and expected Chriſt in the uſe of means, Chriſt at length will diſcover himſelf to us. And yet more immediately it was after the church had ſo deſervedly exalted him in ſuch lofty praiſes, "This is my beloved, the chief of ten thouſand, he is altogether lovely." When we ſet our hearts to the high exaltation of Chriſt above all things in the world, proclaiming him "the chief of ten thouſand," this at the laſt breeds a gracious diſcovery, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine;" for Chriſt, when he ſees us faithful, and ſo loving that we will not endure his abſence, and ſo conſtantly loving that we love him notwithſtanding ſome diſcouragements, it melts him at the laſt, as Joſeph was melted by his brethren.

I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.

In the words you ſee a mutual intereſt and owning between Chriſt and the church; howſoever in the order of words, the church ſaith, "I am my beloved's" firſt; yet in order of nature Chriſt is ours firſt, though not in order of diſcovery. There is one order of knowing, and another order of cauſing. Many things are known by the effect, but they iſſue from a cauſe. I know he is mine, becauſe I am his, I have given myſelf to him. I know it is day, becauſe the ſun is up; there is a proof from the effect: So I know a man is alive, becauſe he walks; there is a proof of the cauſe by the effect. I am his, I have grace to give myſelf up to him; therefore I know he loves me, he is mine. Thus I ſay in order of diſcovery; but in order of nature he is firſt mine, and then I am his. "My beloved is mine, and I am my beloved's."

The

The union and communion betwixt us and Christ hath been already spoken of. Now to speak of the branches. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." That Christ is first ours, and then we are his because he is ours; and the wondrous comfort that issues hence, that Christ himself is ours.

1. How comes Christ to be ours? Christ is ours by his Father's gift, God hath given him for us. Christ is ours by his own gift, he hath given himself for us.

2. And Christ is ours by his spirit, that witnesseth so much to our spirits: For the spirit is given for this purpose, to shew us all things that are given us of God, whereof Christ is the chief; therefore the spirit of Christ tells us that Christ is ours, and Christ being ours, all that he hath is ours. If he be ours, if we have the field, we have all the treasures in the field: If we have him, we have all his, he was born for us, his birth was for us, he became man for us, he was given to death for us. And so, likewise, he is ours in his other estate of exaltation; his rising is for our good, he will cause us to rise also, and ascend with him, and sit in heavenly places, judging the world and the angels. We recover in this second what we lost in the first Adam.

Use 1.—This is a point of wondrous comfort, to shew the riches of a christian, his high estate, that Christ is his. And Christ being ours, God the Father and the Holy Spirit, and all things else in the world, the rich promises are ours; for in Christ they are all made, and for him they shall be performed; for indeed he is the chief promise of all himself, and all are yea and amen in him. Can we want righteousness, while we have Christ's righteousness? Is not his garment large enough for himself and us too? Is not his obedience enough for us? Shall we need to patch it up with our own righteousnes? He is ours, therefore his obedience is ours.

Use 2.—And this should be a ground likewise, of contentment in all condition and estate whatsoever, Christ himself is ours. In the dividing of all things, some men have wealth, honours, friends, and great estates, but not Christ, nor the love of God in Christ, and therefore they have nothing in reason; but a christian he hath Christ himself, Christ is his by faith, and by the spirit's witness. Therefore what if he want those appendencies, the lesser things? he hath the main; what if he want a rivulet, a stream? he hath the spring, the ocean, him in whom all things

are, and shall he not be content? Suppose a man be very covetous, yet God might satisfy him. Why should anxious thoughts disquiet us, when we have such bills, such obligations from him who is faithfulness itself? When a christian cannot say, honour, favour, or great persons are his; yet he can say, he hath that which is worth all, more than all, Christ is his.

O may some say, this is but a speculation, Christ is yours; a man may want and be in misery for all that? No, it is a reality, Christ is ours; he that can command all things is mine, why then do I want other things? Because he sees they are not for my good; if they were, he would not withhold them from me; if there were none to be had without a miracle, no comfort, no friends, he could and would make new ones out of nothing, nay, out of contraries, if it were not better for me to be without them.

Use 3.—That you may the more fully feed on this comfort, study the excellencies of Christ in the scripture, the riches and honour that he hath, the favour he is in with his Father, with the intercession that he makes in heaven; study his mercy, goodness, offices, power, &c. and then come home to yourselves, all this is mine, for he is mine, the love of God is mine, God loves him, and therefore he loves me, because we are both one, he loves me with the same love that he loves his son. Thus we should make use of this, that Christ is ours. I come to the second,

I am my beloved's.

This is a speech of reflection, second in nature, though first in place and discovery to us. Sometimes we can know our own love, when we feel not so much the love of Christ, but Christ's love must be there first, "I am my beloved's."

How are we Christ's beloved? we are his, first of all, by his Father's gift, for God in his eternal purpose gave him for us, and gives us to him, as it is in the excellent prayer, John xvii. "Father, thine they were, and thou gavest them me, I had not them of myself first, but thine they were, before all worlds were; thou gavest them me to redeem them, and my commission doth not extend beyond thy gift; I die for all these that thou gavest me, I sanctify myself for them, that they may be sanctified?" so we are Christ's in his Father's gift; but this is not all, though it be the chief fundamental principal ground of all.

2. For we are his likewise by redemption, Christ took our nature

nature, that he might die for us to purchaſe us. We coſt him dear, we are a bloody ſpouſe to Chriſt, as that froward woman wrongfully ſaid to Moſes, Thou art a bloody huſband unto me; ſo Chriſt without wrong may ſay to the church, Thou art a ſpouſe of blood to me. We were indeed to be his ſpouſe, but firſt he muſt win us by conqueſt in regard of ſatan, and then ſatisfy juſtice; we were in ſuch debt by ſin, lying under God's wrath, ſo as till all debts were paid, we could not in the way of juſtice be given as a ſpouſe to Chriſt.

3. Nor is this all, but we are Chriſt's by marriage alſo; for when he purchaſed us, and paid ſo dear for us, when he died and ſatisfied divine juſtice, he did it with a purpoſe to marry us to himſelf; we have nothing to bring him but debt and miſery, yet he took upon him our nature to diſcharge all, that he might marry us and take us to himſelf; ſo we are his by marriage.

4. Then again we are his by conſent, we have paſſed ourſelves over unto him, he hath given himſelf to us, and we have given ourſelves to him back again. To come to ſome uſe of it, if we be Chriſt's as Chriſt is ours.

Uſe 1.—Firſt, it is a point of wondrous comfort. God will not ſuffer his own to want, he is worſe than an infidel that will ſuffer his family to periſh; when we are once of Chriſt's family and not only of his family, but of his body, his ſpouſe, can we think he will ſuffer us to want that which is needful?

2. Then again, as it comforts us againſt want, ſo it likewiſe fenceth us againſt all the accuſations of ſatan. I am Chriſt's, I am Chriſt's, if he have any thing to ſay, lo we may bid him go to Chriſt; if the creditor comes to the wife, ſhe is not liable to pay her own debts, but ſaith, Go to my huſband; ſo in all temptations learn hence, to ſend ſatan whither he ſhould be ſent; when we cannot anſwer him, ſend him to Chriſt.

3. And for the time to come, what a ground of comfort is this, that we are Chriſt's as well as he is ours? what a plea doth this put into our mouths for all things that are beneficial to us, "Lord, I am thine, ſave me" (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) why? ſave me becauſe I am thine; I am thine, Lord, teach me and direct me. The huſband is to direct the ſpouſe, the head ſhould direct all the ſenſes: all the treaſures of wiſdom are in Chriſt, as all the ſenſes are in the head for the good of the body; all fulneſs dwells in him, therefore plead with him; I want wiſdom, teach

me and instruct me how to behave myself in troubles, in dangers, in fears; if it be an argument strong enough amongst men, (weak men) I am thine, I am thy child, I am thy spouse, &c. Shall we attribute more pity and mercy to ourselves, than to the God of mercy and comfort, who planted these affections in the creature? Shall he make men tender and careful over others, and shall not he himself be careful of his own flesh? Do we think that he will neglect his jewels, his spouse, his diadem and crown? he will not.

But you will urge experience; we see how the church is used, even as a forlorn widow, as if she had no husband in the world, as an orphan that hath no father; therefore how doth this stand good?

Ans. 1.—The answer is, all that the church or any particular christian suffers in this world, is but that there may be a conformity between the spouse and the husband. The head wore a crown of thorns, and went to heaven and happiness through a great deal of misery and abasement in the world, the lowest that ever was; and it is not meet that the church should go to heaven another way.

2. Then again, all this is but to fashion the spouse to be like Christ, but to bring the church and Christ nearer together; that is all the hurt they do, to drive the church nearer to Christ than before, Christ is as near to his church as ever in the greatest afflictions, by his spirit. Christ cries out on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is a strange voice, that God should be his God, and yet notwithstanding seem to forsake him. But God was never more his God than at that time, indeed he was not his God in regard of some feelings that he had enjoyed in former times, he seemed to be forsaken in regard of some sense, as Christ seems to forsake the church in regard of some sense and feeling, but yet he is his God still. So the church may say, I am thine still, though she seem to be forsaken in regard of some feelings, yet she is not deserted in regard of God's care for support of the inward man, and fashioning to Christ. The church hath never sweeter communion with Christ than under the greatest crosses; and therefore they many times have proved the ground of the greatest comforts, for Christ leads the church into the wilderness, and then speaks to her heart, Hosea ii. 14. Christ speaks to the heart of his spouse in the wilderness, that is, in a place of no comfort; there

are

are no orchards or pleaſures, but all diſcomforts; there a man muſt have it from heaven, if he have any good in the wilderneſs. In that wilderneſs, that is, a deſolate diſconſolate eſtate, Chriſt ſpeaks to the heart of his children; there is, in the wilderneſs oftentimes a ſweet intercourſe of love, incomparably beyond the time of proſperity.

Again, to ſtay your hearts, know this will not be long, as we ſee here the church ſeemed to be forſaken and neglected, fell into the hands of cruel watchmen, and was fain to go through this and that means, but it was not long ere ſhe met with him whom ſhe ſought after; it may be midnight at this time, but the night continues not long, it will be morning ere long; therefore the church may well ſay, "Rejoice not againſt me, O mine enemy," as it is Micah vii; "for though I be fallen, I ſhall riſe again, though I ſit in darkneſs, the Lord will be a light unto me." It ſhall not be always ill with the church; thoſe that ſurvive us ſhall ſee other manner of days than we ſee yet, whatſoever we ſhall ourſelves; hence we have alſo an uſe of trial. Whoſoever are Chriſt's, they have hearts to give themſelves to him, as he gives himſelf, not his goods or honours, but himſelf for his church. So the church gives herſelf to Chriſt, my delight is in him, he hath myſelf, my heart, my love and affection, my joy and delight, and with myſelf, if I have any honour he ſhall have it, I will uſe it for his glory; my riches I will give to him and his church, and miniſtry and children, as occaſion ſhall ſerve, I am his, therefore all that I have is his, if he ask it at my hands. It is ſaid of the Macedonians, they gave themſelves to Chriſt, and then their riches and goods; it is an eaſy matter to give our riches to Chriſt, when we have given ourſelves firſt: a chriſtian as ſoon as he becomes a chriſtian, and ever after to death, and in death too, gives up himſelf to Chriſt; they that ſtand with Chriſt, and will give this or that particular, will part only with idle things that they may ſpare, are they Chriſt's? No, a chriſtian gives himſelf and all his to Chriſt: ſo we ſee here what we ſhould do if Chriſt be ours, let us give up ourſelves to him, as it is, Rom. xii. The iſſue of all that learned profound diſcourſe in the former part of the Epiſtle, that Chriſt juſtifieth us by his righteouſneſs and merit, and hath predeſtinated and elected us, and refuſed others, is this, "I beſeech you, give up your ſouls and all, as a living ſacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God."

In brief, theſe words imply renunciation and reſignation. I

am his, that is, I have given up myſelf to him, therefore I renounce all others that ſtand not with his love and liking; I am not only his by way of ſervice, which I owe him above all that call for it, but I am his by way of reſignation; if he will have me die, I will die; if he will have me live here, I will, I have not myſelf to diſpoſe of any longer, I have altogether alienated myſelf from myſelf, I am his to ſerve him, his to be diſpoſed of by him, I have renounced all others.

Therefore here we have another anſwer to ſatan; if he comes to us to ſolicit us to ſin, let the chriſtian heart make this anſwer, I am not mine own, what hath ſatan and his inſtruments to do with me? is my body his to defile? is my tongue his to ſwear at his pleaſure? ſhall I make the temple of God the member of a harlot? as the Apoſtle reaſons, ſhall I defile myſelf with ſin? What ſays converted Ephraim, Hoſea xiv. 8. "What have I any more to do with idols, for I have ſeen and obſerved him?" We ought to have ſuch reſolutions ready in our hearts. Indeed when a chriſtian is reſolute, the world counts him to be loſt: He is gone, we have loſt him, ſay your diſſolute profane perſons. It is true they have loſt him indeed, for he is not his own, much leſs theirs any longer; but he is found to God, and himſelf, and the church. Thus we ſee what ſprings from this, that Chriſt is ours, and that we are Chriſt's back again. Let us carry this with us even to death; and if times ſhould come that God ſhould honour us by ſerving himſelf of us in our lives, if Chriſt will have us ſpend our blood, conſider this, I am not mine own in life nor death, and it is my happineſs that I am not mine own; for if I were mine own, what ſhould I do with myſelf? I ſhould loſe myſelf as Adam did. It is therefore my happineſs that I am not mine own, that I am not the world's, that I am not the devil's, that none elſe hath to do with me, to claim any intereſt in me, but I am Chriſt's. If I do any thing for others, it is for Chriſt's ſake. Remember this for the time to come, if there be any thing that we will not part with for Chriſt's ſake, it will be our bane, we ſhall loſe Chriſt and it too. If we will not ſay with a perfect ſpirit, I am his, my life, my credit, my perſon is his, any thing his, then what we will not give for him, at length we ſhall loſe, and part with it and him too.

SER-

SERMON TWENTIETH.

CANTICLES vi. 2.

"*I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine, he feedeth among the "lillies.*"

THE church, you ſee here, though ſhe ſtood out a while againſt all Chriſt's invitation and knocking, yet at length ſhe is brought to yield herſelf up wholly unto Chriſt, and to renounce herſelf, which courſe God takes with moſt, yea in a manner with all his people, ere they go out of this world, to lay all high things low, to beat down every high thought and imagination which exalteth itſelf againſt him, that they may give themſelves and all they have to Chriſt, if he call for it, for he that doth not ſo is not worthy of Chriſt. If we do not this, at leaſt in preparation of mind, let us not own the name of chriſtians, leſt we own that which ſhall further increaſe and aggravate our condemnation. Profeſſing religion one way, and yet alienating our minds to our luſts and pleaſures of the world another way, to have peculiar love-fits of our own, diſtinct from Chriſt, how ſtands this with "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine?" how ſtands it with the ſelf-reſignation that was ſpoken of before?

Now this follows upon apprehenſion of Chriſt being ours, "I am my beloved's, becauſe my beloved is mine firſt." There are four reaſons why Chriſt muſt be given to us, before we can give ourſelves to him by this ſelf-reſignation:

1. Becauſe he is the chief ſpring of all good affections, which he muſt plant in us, loving us ere we can love him, 1 John iv. 10.

2. Becauſe love deſcends. Though it be of a fiery nature, yet in this it is contrary, for love deſcends; whereas fire aſcends. The ſuperior firſt loves the inferior; Chriſt muſt deſcend in his love to us, ere we can aſcend to him in our affections.

3. Becauſe our nature is ſuch, that we cannot love but where we know ourſelves to be loved firſt; therefore God is indulgent to us herein, and that we may love him, he manifeſts his love firſt to us.

4. Becauſe, naturally, ourſelves being conſcious of guilt, are full of fears from thence: ſo that if the ſoul be not perſuaded firſt

of Christ's love, it runs away from him, as Adam did from God, and as Peter from Christ, "Depart from me, for I am but a sinful man." So the soul of every man would say, if first it were not persuaded of God's love in Christ. Who amongst us shall dwell with the everlasting burning? Therefore to prevent that dispostion of soul which would rise out of the sense of guilt and unworthiness, God first speaks to us in Christ, at length saying unto our souls, "I am thy salvation;" whereupon the soul first finding his love, loves him back again, of whom it finds itself so much beloved: so that our love is but a reflexion of his,—"I am my beloved's, because my beloved is mine."

It is with the spirit of God as with the spirits in the soul and body of a man. There is a marriage betwixt the body and the soul; the spirits join both together, being of a middle nature, for they have somewhat spiritual near the soul, and somewhat bodily near the body; therefore they come between the body and the soul, and are the instruments thereof whereby it works. So it is with the spirit of God; the same spirit that tells the soul that Christ is ours, the same spirit makes up the match on our part, and gives us up to Christ again. Let this then be the trial, that we are Christ's, by the spiritual echo that our souls makes to that report which Christ makes to our souls, whether in promises or in instructions.

Use 1.—See hence, likewise, the nature of faith; for these are the words of faith, as well as of love. Faith hath two branches, it doth give as well as take. Faith receives Christ, and says, Christ is mine; and the same faith saith, I am Christ's again.—Indeed our souls are empty, so that the main work of faith is to be an empty hand—*Mendica manus*, (as Luther calls it) a beggar's hand to receive; but when it hath received, it gives back again, both ourselves and all that we can do; as 2 Cor. viii. 5.—The churches of Macedonia gave themselves, and then they gave their goods. Where faith is, there will be a giving of ourselves and our goods, and (by a proportion) our strength, wits, and all back again. This discovers a great deal of empty false faith in the world; for undoubtedly if it were true faith, there would be a yielding back again.

Use 2.—And then again, these words discover the mutual coherence of justification and sanctification, and their dependence one upon another. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." Christ is mine, his righteousness is mine for my justification.

fication. I am cloathed with Chriſt; as it is, Rev. xii. the ſpouſe there is cloathed with the ſun, with the beams of Chriſt. But is that all? No; I am my beloved's, I am Chriſt's. There is a return of faith in ſanctification; the ſame ſpirit that witneſſeth Chriſt is ours, it ſanctifies and alters our diſpoſition, that we can ſay, I am Chriſt's. It ſerves to inſtruct us, therefore, in the neceſſary connexion of theſe two, juſtification and ſanctification, againſt the idle ſlander of papiſts, that ſinfully traduce that doctrine, as if we were ſolifidians, as if we parted juſtification from ſanctification. No; we hold here, that whenſoever Chriſt is ours, there is a ſpirit of ſanctification in us, to yield all to Chriſt, though this reſignation be not preſently perfect.

Uſe 3.—This likewiſe helps us (by way of direction) to underſtand the covenant of grace, and the ſeals of the covenant, what they enforce and comprife, not only what God will do to us, but the duty we are to do to him again, though we do it in his ſtrength. A covenant holds not on one ſide, but on both, "Chriſt is mine, and I am Chriſt's again;" again, "I will be their God," but they muſt have grace to be his people, and then the covenant is made up. The covenant of grace is ſo called, becauſe God is ſo gracious as to enable us to perform our own part.

And ſo in the ſeals of the covenant, in baptiſm, God doth not only bind himſelf to do thus and thus to us, but binds us alſo to do back again to him. So in the communion, we promiſe to lead a new life, renewing our covenant; and therefore we muſt not think that all is well when we received our Maker, though we continue in a ſcandalous fruitleſs courſe of life. No; there is a promiſe in the ſacrament, the ſeal of the covenant of grace, to yield up ourſelves to God, to return to Chriſt again with our duty: then we come as we ſhould do, when we come thus diſpoſed. This for direction, "My beloved is mine, and I am my beloved's.

Uſe 4.—To proceed to make an uſe of comfort to poor doubting chriſtians. "I am my beloved's" is the voice of the whole church, that all ranks of chriſtians (if they be true) may without preſumption take up. I have not ſo much faith, ſo much love, ſo much grace, ſo much patience, as another, ſaith a poor chriſtian, therefore I none of Chriſt's; but we muſt know that Chriſt hath in his church of all ranks, and they are all his ſpouſe, one as well as another. There is no exception, there is a little ſpirit

of

of emulation and a ſpice of envy in chriſtians that are weaker, if they have not all that great meaſure of grace which they ſee in others, they fear they have none at all; as if there were not babes in Chriſt's ſchool, as well as men and grown perſons.

Then again, we ſee here the nature of faith in the whole church; it is the ſame that is in every particular, and the ſame in every particular that it is in the whole church. The whole church ſaith, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine," I appropriate to him, there is a ſpirit of appropriation in the whole, and there is ſo in each particular. Every chriſtian may ſay with Paul, "I live by faith in the ſon of God, that hath loved me and gave himſelf for me," and with Thomas, "My God and my Lord."

The ground hereof is, becauſe they are all one in Chriſt, and there is one and the ſame ſpirit in the whole church and every particular chriſtian, as in pipes, though of different ſounds, yet there is the ſame breath in them, ſo chriſtians may have different ſounds, from the greater or leſs ſtrength of grace that is in the one and the other, but all comes from the ſame breath, the ſame ſpirit. The ſpirit in the bride ſaith, Come, the whole church ſaith it, and every particular chriſtian muſt ſay it, becauſe as the body is acted by one ſpirit, and makes but one natural body, though conſiſting of many parts weaker and ſtronger, ſo ſhould there be harmony in this myſtical body acted by that one ſpirit of Chriſt, who ſo regards all, as if there were but one, and regards every one ſo as he doth not forget the whole, "Sic omnibus attentus ut non detentus," &c. Chriſt ſo attends to all, that he is not detained from any particular, and he ſo attends to every particular, that he is not reſtrained from all, there is the ſame love to all as to one, and to every one as if there were no other; he ſo loves each one, that every chriſtian may ſay, as well as the whole church, Chriſt is mine, and I am Chriſt's.

In thoſe things which we call homogeneal, there is the ſame nature in each quantity as in the whole; as there is the ſame nature in one drop of water as in the whole ocean, all is water, and the ſame reſpect of a ſpark and of the element of fire; ſo Chriſt bears the ſame reſpect to the church as to every particular, and to every particular as to the church.

Uſe 5.—To come to make a uſe of direction, how to come to be able to ſay this, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."

mine." For answer hereto, take notice in the first place from the dependence, Christ must be first ours before we can give ourselves to him, therefore we must dwell in the consideration of Christ's love; this must direct and lead our method in this thing. Would we have our hearts to love Christ, to trust in him, and to embrace him? why then think, What is he to us? begin there: nay, and what we are? weak, and in our apprehension lost; then go to consider his love, his constant love to his church and children, "whom he loves, he loves to the end." We must warm our souls with the consideration of the love of God in him to us, and this will stir up our faith to him back again.—For we are more safe in that he is ours, than that we give ourselves to him: we are more safe in his comprehending of us, than in our clasping and holding of him. As we say of the mother and the child, both hold, but the safety of the child is that the mother holds him. If Christ once give himself to us, he will make good his own part always, our safety is more on his side than on ours. If ever we have felt the love of Christ, we may comfort ourselves with the constancy and perpetuity thereof, though perhaps we find not our affections warmed to him at all times, nor alike, yet the strength of a christian's comfort lies in this, that first, "Christ is mine," and then in the second place, that "I am his." Now, I say, that we may be able to maintain this blessed tradition of giving ourselves to Christ, let us dwell on the consideration of his love to us, and of the the necessity that we have of him, how miserable we are without him, poor, beggarly, in bondage to the devil, therefore we must have him to recover us out of debt, and to enrich us, for Christ's love carries him forth not only to pay all our debts for us, but to enrich us, and it is a protecting preserving love till he brings us to heaven, his own place, where we shall ever be with him. The consideration of these things will warm our hearts, and for this purpose serves the ministry.

2. We should therefore in the next place attend upon the word for this very end. Wherefore serves the ministry? Among many others, this is one chief end, to lay open the unsearchable riches of Christ, therein you have something of Christ unfolded, of his natures, offices, and the benefits we have by him, redemption, and freedom, and a right to all things in him, the excellencies of another world; therefore attend upon the means of salvation, that we may know what riches we have in him; this will keep our affections close to Christ, so as to say, "I am his."

And

4. And let us labour alſo every day more and more, to bring all our love to him. We ſee in burning glaſſes, where the beams of the ſun meet in one, what force they have, becauſe there is an union of the beams in a little point.—Let it be our labour that all the beams of our love may meet in Chriſt, that he may be as the church ſaith, our beloved, "My beloved is mine, and I am my beloved's" (ſaith ſhe), as if the church had no love out of Chriſt: And is it love loſt? No, but as Chriſt is the church's beloved, ſo the church is Chriſt's love again, as we ſee in this book often, "My love, my dove." As all ſtreams meet in the great ocean, ſo let our love meet in Chriſt. We may love other things, and we ſhould do ſo, but no otherwiſe than as they convey love to us from Chriſt, and may be the means of drawing up our affections unto Chriſt. We may love our friends (and we ought to do ſo) and other bleſſings of God, but how? No otherwiſe than as tokens of his love to us: we love a thing that our friend ſends to us, Oh but it is as it doth convey his affection to us; ſo muſt we love all things, as they come from God's love to us in Chriſt.

And indeed whatſoever we have is a love token, even our very afflictions themſelves. Whom I love, I rebuke.

Again, that we may inflame our hearts with the love of Chriſt, as we are exhorted by Jude, let us conſider the vanity of all things that ſhould entice us from Chriſt, and labour every day more and more to draw our affections from them, as we are exhorted, Pſalm xlv. "Hearken, O daughter, and conſider, and incline thine ear, forget alſo thy father's houſe, ſo ſhall the king deſire thy beauty." So if we will have Chriſt to delight in us, that we may ſay we are his, let us labour to ſequeſter our affections more and more from all earthly things, that we may not have ſuch hearts, as St. James ſpeaks of, adulterous hearts. O ye adulterers and adultereſſes, know you not that the love of the world is enmity with God?

Indeed there is reaſon for this exhortation, for all earthly things are vain and empty things, there is an emptineſs in whatſoever is in the world (ſave Chriſt), therefore we ſhould not ſet our affections too much upon them; a man cannot be wiſe in loving any thing but Chriſt, and what he loves for Chriſt. Therefore let us follow that counſel, to draw ourſelves from our former company, acquaintance, pleaſures, delights, and vanities; we cannot beſtow our love and our affections better than upon

Chriſt.

Christ. It is a happiness that we have such affections as joy, delight, and love, planted in us by God; and what a happiness is it, that we should have such an excellent object to fill those affections, yea to transcend and more than satisfy them? Therefore the apostle wisheth that they may know all the dimensions of God's love in Christ; there is a height, breadth, length and depth of the love of God, Eph. iii. 18. And let us think of the dimensions, the height, breadth, and depth of our misery out of Christ. The more excellent our natures are, the more miserable they are if not changed; for look what degree of excellency we have, (if it be not advanced in Christ) we have so much misery being out of him. Therefore let us labour to see this, so as to value our being in him, so as to be able, upon good grounds, to say, "I and my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."

Again, let us labour to walk in the light of a sanctified knowledge, to be attained by the gospel; for as it is, 1 John i. 3. the end of all our preaching is to assure Christ to the soul, that we may be able to say, without deceiving our own souls, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." All preaching, I say, is for this end; the terror of the law and the discovery of corruption is to drive us out of ourselves to him, and then to provoke us to grow up unto him more and more. Therefore saith John, all our preaching is, that we may have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and they with us. And what doth he make an evidence of that fellowship? Walking in the light, as he is light, or else we are liars. He is bold, in plain terms, to give us the lie, to say we are Christ's, and have communion with the Father and the Son; when yet we walk in darkness, in sins against conscience, in wilful ignorance, the darkness of an evil life, we have no communion with Christ; therefore if we will have communion with him, let us walk in the light, and labour to be lightsome in our understandings, to have a great deal of knowledge, and then to walk answerable to that light and revelation that we have. Those that live in sins against conscience, and are friends to the darkness of ignorance, of an evil life, Oh they never think of the fellowship with Christ and with God! These things are mere riddles to them, they have no hope of them; or if any, their hope is vain. They bar themselves of ever having comfortable communion with Christ here, much less shall they enjoy him hereafter in heaven. Therefore labour every day more and more to grow rich in knowledge, to get light, and to walk in that light; to which end, pray with the holy apostle,

Ephes.

Ephes. i. that you may have the spirit of revelation, that excellent spirit of God to reveal the things of God, that we may have the light discovered to us.

What a world of comfort hath a christian that hath light in him, and walks in that light, above another man! Whether he live or die, the light brings him into fellowship with the Father of lights. He that hath this light knows his condition and his way, and whither he goeth; when he dieth, he knows in what condition he dieth, and upon what grounds. The very light of nature is comfortable, much more that of grace; therefore labour to grow daily more and more in the knowledge and obedience of the light.

All professors of the gospel are either such as are not Christ's, or such as are his. For such as are not yet, that you may be provoked to draw to fellowship with Christ, do but consider you are as branches cut off, that will wither and die, and be cast into the fire, unless you be grafted into the living stock, Christ. You are as naked persons in a storm, not cloathed with any thing to stand against the storm of God's wrath; let this force you to get into Christ.

And next for encouragement consider, Christ offereth himself to all in the gospel; and that is the end of the ministry, to bring Christ and our souls together, to make a spiritual marriage, to lay open his riches, and to draw you to him. If you confess your sins, he will forgive them, and you shall have mercy. He relieves those that are wearied and heavy laden, and bids those come to him that are thirsty. "Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost;" Christ offers himself in mercy to the worst soul. Therefore, if there be any that have lived in evil courses in former times, consider that, upon repentance, all shall be forgotten, and as a mist scattered away and cast into the bottom of the sea. Christ offers himself to you; these are the times, this is the hour of grace, now the water is stirring for you to enter. Do but entertain Christ, and desire that he may be yours to rule you and guide you, and all will be well for the time to come.

Object.—Do not object, I am a loathsome creature, full of rebellions.

Ans.—Christ doth not match with you because you are good, but to make you good. Christ takes you not with any dowry; all

all that he requires is to confeſs your beggary, and to come with emptineſs. He takes us not becauſe we are clean, but becauſe he will purge us; he takes us in our blood when he firſt takes us. Let none deſpair either for want of worth or of ſtrength. Chriſt ſeeth that for ſtrength we are dead, and for worth we are enemies; but he gives us both ſpiritual ſtrength and worth, takes us near to himſelf, and enricheth us. Let none, therefore, be diſcouraged; it is our office thus to lay open and to offer the riches of Chriſt. If you will not come in, but love your ſinful courſes more than Chriſt, then you periſh in your blood, and we free our hands, and may free our ſouls from the guilt thereof; therefore, as you love your own ſouls, come in at length, and ſtand out no longer.

And for thoſe that have in ſome meaſure given themſelves up to Chriſt, and can ſay, "He is mine, and I am his," let them go on with comfort, and never be diſcouraged for the infirmities that hang about them: For one part of Chriſt's office is to purge his church by his ſpirit more and more, Epheſ. v. 27.; not to caſt her away for her infirmities, but to waſh and cleanſe it more and more, till it be a glorious ſpouſe like himſelf. For if the huſband muſt, by the bond of nature, bear with the infirmities of his wife (as the weaker veſſel) doth not Chriſt bind himſelf by that which he accounts us bound? Is there more love, and mercy, and pity in us to thoſe that we take near us, than there is in Chriſt to us? What a moſt blaſphemous thought were this to conceive ſo! Only let us take heed of being in league with ſin, for we cannot give our ſouls to Chriſt, and to ſinful courſes too. Chriſt will allow of no bigamy, or double marriage, where he hath any thing to do: we muſt have ſingle hearts, reſolving, though I fall, yet I purpoſe to pleaſe Chriſt, and to go on in a good converſation; and if our hearts tell us ſo, daily infirmities ought not to diſcourage us, we have helps enough for theſe.—Firſt, Chriſt bids us aſk forgiveneſs, and then we have the mercy of Chriſt to bear with weaker veſſels; then his advocation, he is now in heaven to plead for us; if we were perfect, we needed not that office. Let none be diſcouraged therefore, but let us labour more and more, that we may be able to comprehend, in ſome meaſure, the love of Chriſt, ſo will all duties come off ſweetly and eaſily, and then we ſhall be enabled to ſuffer all things not only willingly, but chearfully, and rejoice in them.—Love is of the nature of fire, which as it ſevereth and conſumeth all that is oppoſite, all droſs and dregs, and diſſolves coldneſs;

ſo

ſo it quickens and makes active and lively; it hath a kind of conſtraining force, a ſweet violence, (as the apoſtle ſaith) "the love of Chriſt conſtraineth," 2 Cor. v. 14.

Let a man that loves the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity, be called to part with his life, he will yield it as a ſacrifice with comfort. Come what will, all is welcome when we are inflamed with the love of Chriſt, and the more we ſuffer, the more we find his love; but he reſerves the manifeſtation of his love moſt for times of ſuffering; and the more we find the manifeſtation of his love, the more we love him back again, and rejoice in ſuffering for him that we love ſo, whether they be duties of obedience, active or paſſive, doing or ſuffering, all comes off with abundance of cheatfulneſs and eaſe, where the love of Chriſt is, that the ſoul can ſay, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine," nothing in the world is able to make ſuch a ſoul miſerable. It follows,

He feedeth among the lillies.

The church here ſhews where Chriſt feeds. But the queſtion is, Whether it be the feeding of the church and people that is here meant, or whether he feeds himſelf? For anſwer, he both feeds his church among the lillies, and delights himſelf to be there; the one follows the other, eſpecially it is meant of the church, thoſe that are his, he feeds them among the lillies.

How?

Lillies are ſuch kind of flowers as require a great deal of nouriſhment, and grow beſt in vallies and fat ground; therefore when ſhe ſaith, "he feeds among the lillies," the meaning is, he feeds his church and people in fat paſtures; as ſheep in ſuch grounds are ſweet and fruitful, ſuch are his holy word and the communion of ſaints, theſe are eſpecially the paſtures wherein he feeds his church. The holy truths of God are the food of the ſoul, whereby it is cheriſhed and nouriſhed up to life everlaſting. This whole book is a kind of paſtoral (to underſtand the word a little better) a Song of a beloved concerning a beloved; therefore Chriſt, in many places of this book, he takes upon him the term and carriage (as it were) of a loving ſhepherd, who labours to find out for his ſheep the fatteſt, fruitfulleſt, beſt and ſweeteſt paſtures, that they may grow up as calves of the ſtall, as it is Malachi iv. 2. that they may grow and be well liking.

You have (to give light to this place) a phraſe ſomewhat like

to

to this, where he follows the point more at large. Cant. i. 7. the church there prays to Chriſt, "Tell me, O thou whom my ſoul loveth, where thou makeſt thy flocks to reſt at noon." Thoſe that are coming up in the church, deſire to know with whom they may join, and what truths they may embrace. "Tell me where thou feedeſt, and where thou makeſt thy flocks to reſt at noon;" that is, in the greateſt heat and ſtorm of perſecution, as at noon-day the ſun is hotteſt: "For why ſhould I be as one that turns aſide by the flocks of thy companions?" that is, by thoſe that are not true friends, that are falſe ſhepherds—why ſhould I be drawn away by them? I deſire to feed where thou feedeſt among the ſheep. Why ſhould I be as one that turns aſide by the flocks of thoſe that are enemies to thee? as antichriſt is to Chriſt. Thus the church puts a queſtion to Chriſt, whereunto Chriſt replies, ver. 8. "If thou know not, O thou faireſt among women, go thy way forth by the footſteps of the flocks, and feed thy kids beſide the ſhepherds tents;" that is, if thou know not, go thy way forth, get thee out of thyſelf, out of the world, out of thy former courſe; put thyſelf forward, ſtay not complaining, go on, put thyſelf to endeavour, go thy way forth, whither? in the footſteps of the flocks; ſee the ſteps of chriſtians in the beſt times of the church, in former times, tread in the ſteps of thoſe that lived in the beſt ages of the church; feed thy kids, thy chriſtians, beſide the ſhepherds tents, the beſt ſhepherds; mark where the apoſtles and prophets feed their ſheep, there feed thou, and mark the footſteps of the flock that have lived in the beſt times; for of all times, ſince the apoſtles and prophets, we muſt follow thoſe primitive beſt times. All churches are ſo far true churches, as they have conſanguinity with the primitive, apoſtolical and prophetical churches.

Therefore we are now to go out by the footſteps of the flock. Mark the footſteps of former chriſtians, Abraham, Moſes, and David; and in Chriſt's time, of John, Peter, and the reſt, bleſſed ſaints, walk as they walked, go their way, and feed yourſelves by the ſhepherds tents: mark the ſhepherds where they have their tents. So theſe words have reference to the prophetical, eſpecially to the evangelical times, whereunto we muſt conform ourſelves, for the latter times are apoſtate times. After a certain ſeaſon the church kept not her purity, which the ſcriptures foretold directly, that we ſhould not take ſcandal at it; the church did fall to a kind of admiration of antichriſt, and em-

braced doctrines of devils; therefore now we muſt not follow theſe companies that lead into bye-paths, contrary to the apoſtolical ways; but ſee wherein our church agrees with the apoſtolical churches and truths, and embrace no truth for the food of our ſouls, but what we find in the goſpel. For antichriſt feeds his flock with wind, and with poiſon, and with empty things. For what hath been the food in popery? ſweet and goodly titles, as if they, poor ſouls, had the beſt paſtors in the world, although they adminiſter to them nothing but that which will be the bane of their ſouls, full of poiſon and fraud. This is ſpoken to unfold that place which gives light to this, ſpoken of the paſtoral care of Chriſt, "he feeds his flocks among the lillies," plentifully and ſweetly. From hence may be briefly obſerved, firſt, That Chriſt feeds as well as breeds.

And we have need of feeding, as well as breeding: where doſt thou feed? that is, build up thy children, and go on with the work begun in them? We have need to be fed after we are bred; and Chriſt (anſwerable to our exigence and neceſſity) he feeds as well as breeds; and that word, which is the ſeed to beget us, is that which feeds too. What is the ſeed of the new birth? the word of God, the holy promiſes, they are the ſeed, the ſpirit mingling with them, whereby a chriſtian is born; and being born, is cheriſhed and bred; therefore, "as new born babes," ſaith the apoſtle, 1 Pet. ii. 1. "deſire the ſincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." So that the ſame thing is both the ſeed of a chriſtian, and that which breeds him, the bleſſed truths and promiſes of God.

If you aſk, Why we muſt grow up, and be fed ſtill?

Anſw. 1. Do but aſk your own ſouls, whether there be not a perpetual renewing of corruption, which breaks out into new guilt every day? Therefore we have need to feed every day anew upon the promiſes, upon old promiſes with new affections; ſomething breaks out ever and anon which abaſeth the ſoul of a chriſtian, that makes him go with a ſharp appetite to the bleſſed truths which feed his ſoul.

Anſw. 2. And then again, we need a great deal of ſtrength, which is maintained by feeding; beſides the guilt of the ſoul, there needs ſtrength for duty, which muſt be fetched from the bleſſed word of God, and the comforts thence, whereby we are able to withſtand and reſiſt, to ſtand and do all that we do.

Anſw.

Anſw. 3. And then we are ſet upon by variety of temptations within and without, which require variety of wiſdom and ſtrength, all which muſt be got by feeding; and therefore you ſee a chriſtian, for his ſubſiſtence and being, hath need of a feeding, cheriſhing, and maintaining ſtill, by the ſweet and bleſſed directions and promiſes out of the word of God.

Therefore you may ſee what kind of atheiſtical creatures thoſe are, and how much they are to be regarded that turn off all with a compendium in religion; for, if we know that we muſt love God above all, and our neighbour as ourſelves, and that Chriſt died for all, we know enough, more than we can practiſe. They think thoſe compendiums will ſerve the turn, as if there were not a neceſſity of growing ſtill further and further in diſtinct knowledge. Alas! the ſoul needs to be fed continually, it will ſtagger elſe, and be inſufficient to ſtand againſt temptation, or to perform duties.

A ſecond general point of the text is this, That as Chriſt feedeth ſtill his flock and people, ſo he feeds them fully, plentifully, and ſweetly among the lilies.—There are ſaving truths enough, there is an all-ſufficiency in the book of God: what need we go out to man's inventions, ſeeing there is a fulneſs and all-ſufficiency of truth there? Whatſoever is not in that, is wind, or poiſon—in the word is a full kind of feeding. In former times, when they had not the ſcriptures, and the comforts of them to feed on, what did the poor ſouls then? and what do thoſe remaining in popery feed on? upon ſtones, as it were.—There was a dream of a holy man in thoſe times ((many hundred years ago) that he ſaw one having deal of good bread to feed on, and yet all the while, poor wretch, he fed on ſtones. What folly and miſery is this, when there are delicate things to feed on, to gnaw upon ſtones? and what is all the ſchool learning almoſt (except one or two that had better ſpirits than the reſt) but a gnawing upon ſtones, barren diſtinctions, that had no ſubſtance in them? they had the ſcriptures, (though they were locked up in Latin, an unknown tongue), they had the ſweet paſture of Chriſt to feed on, and yet all this while they fed, as it were, on ſtones.

This ſhould ſhew us likewiſe our own bleſſedneſs, who live in theſe times wherein the ſtreams of the goſpel run abundantly, ſweetly, and pleaſantly. There is a fulneſs among us, even in

the ſpirits of the worſt ſort, there is a fulneſs almoſt to loathing of that heavenly manna; but thoſe ſouls who ever were acquainted with the neceſſity of it, rather feel a want than a fulneſs, and ſtill grow up to a further deſire, that as they have plentiful means, ſo they may have plentiful affections after, and ſtrength by thoſe means. Let us know our own happineſs in theſe times—is it not a comfort to know where to feed, and to have paſtures to go to without ſuſpicion of poiſon; that we may feed ourſelves with comforts fully, without fear of bane, or noiſome mingling of bitter herbs in the pot, which would diſreliſh all the reſt? to know that there are truths that we may feed on ſafely? This the church in the former place, Cant. i. 6, 7. accounted a great privilege, "O ſhew me where thou feedeſt at noon." In the greateſt heat of perſecution, that I may feed among them: ſo then it is a great privilege to know where to feed, and ſo to be eſteemed, that thereby we may be ſtirred up to be thankful for our own good, and to improve theſe privileges to our ſouls comfort.

But the ſecond branch that muſt be touched a little, is, That there is fulneſs no where but in God's houſe; and that there, and there only, is that which ſatisfies the ſoul with fatneſs and ſweetneſs.

Nay, not only the promiſes, but the very rebukes of ſcripture are ſweet. The rebukes of a friend, they feed the ſoul; for we have many corruptions which hinder our communion with God, ſo that a chriſtian delights to have his corruptions rebuked; for he knows, if he leaves them, he ſhall grow into further communion with Chriſt, wherein ſtands his happineſs in this world, and the fulneſs of his happineſs in the world to come.

If this be ſo, let us know then, that when we come to religion, we loſe not the ſweetneſs of our lives, but only translate them to a far more excellent and better condition. Perhaps we fed before upon vain authors, upon (as it were) gravel, vain company, but now we have our delight, and perhaps find more pleaſure in better things, inſtead of that which fed our idle fancy (vain books and the like), now we have holy truths to delight our ſoul. Believe it, a Chriſtian never knows what comfort is to purpoſe, till he be downright and ſincere in religion. Therefore Auſtin ſaith of himſelf, "Lord, I have wanted thy ſweetneſs too long; I ſee all my former life (that I thought had

had ſuch ſweetneſs in it) was nothing at all but huſks, empty things; now I know where ſweetneſs is, it is in the word and truth Therefore let us not miſconceive of religion, as of a mopiſh and dull thing, wherein we muſt loſe all comfort, if we give ourſelves over to the ſtudy thereof; muſt we ſo? muſt we loſe our comfort? Nay, we have no comfort till we be religious indeed. Chriſt feeds not his among thorns and briars, and ſtinking weeds, but among lillies: Doſt thou think he feeds them among unſavoury, harſh, fretting, galling things? No, he feeds among lillies. Therefore when thou comeſt to religion, think that thou comeſt to comfort, to refreſh thy ſoul. Let us make uſe of this for our ſouls comfort, to make us more in love with the ways of Chriſt.

Now to ſeal this further, ſee what the ſcripture ſaith in parallel places—Pſal. xxiii. "The Lord is my ſhepherd;" and what is the uſe that David preſently makes hereof? why, I ſhall want nothing, he will feed me plentifully and abundantly. The whole Pſalm is nothing but a commenting upon that word, "the Lord is my ſhepherd." How doth he perform the duty of a ſhepherd? "He makes me to ly down in green paſtures, and leads me by the ſtill waters." It is not only meant of the body, but of the ſoul chiefly—"he reſtoreth my ſoul;" that is, when my ſoul languiſheth, and is ready to faint, he reſtores it, and gives me, as it were, a new ſoul, he refreſheth it. We ſay recreation is the creating of a thing anew ſo he reſtores my ſoul, he gives me my ſoul anew, with freſh comforts. Thus the bleſſed ſhepherd doth, and how? becauſe "he feeds among the lillies," the promiſes of the goſpel; then he doth not only do good to the body and ſoul; but he guides all our ways, all our goings out. "He leads me in the paths of righteouſneſs," and why? becauſe I deſerve ſo much at his hands? No, for his own name's ſake, becauſe he hath purchaſed me with his blood, and given his life for his ſheep, hath bought me ſo dear, though there be no worth in me. He goes on, "though I walk through all temptations and troubles," which are as "the valley of the ſhadow of death," that is, where there is nothing but diſconſolation and miſery; "yet I will fear none ill, thou with thy rod and ſtaff doſt comfort me." If I, as a wandering ſheep, venture to go out of the way, thou out of thy care, being a ſweet and loving ſhepherd, wilt pull me in with thy hook and ſtaff again—he hath not only cared to feed us, but to govern us alſo. What

a ſweet ſhepherd and Saviour have we in covenant, that deals thus with us? and ſo he proceeds, "thou wilt prepare my table in the preſence of mine enemies;" and for the time to come, he promiſeth himſelf as much that God, as he hath been a ſhepherd (for the preſent) to provide all things neceſſary for body and ſoul, and guidance, ſo ſurely the goodneſs of the Lord ſhall follow me all the days of my life, for he is a perpetual ſhepherd, he will not leave us till he hath brought us to heaven. Thus we ſee in this place the ſweet care of Chriſt.

The like place you have, Iſa. xl. 11. "He ſhall feed his flock like a ſhepherd, he ſhall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his boſom, and ſhall gently lead thoſe that are with young." So he leads them into the paſtures, and feeds them plentifully and ſweetly, not only with ſweet things, but with a tender care, which is ſweeter. As a ſhepherd, he takes into his boſom the poor lambs that cannot walk themſelves, and the ſheep that are heavy with young, he cares for them; he gently leads them that are poor weak Chriſtians, that ſtruggle and conflict with many temptations and corruptions. Chriſt hath a tender care of them, he carries them, as it were, in his boſom and in his arms, and leads them gently; for indeed all Chriſt's ſheep are weak, every one hath ſomewhat to complain of, therefore he hath a tender care, he feeds them tenderly and ſweetly, or elſe they might periſh.

Another place notable to this purpoſe, is in Ezek. xxxiv. 14. wherein you have the ſame metaphor from a loving ſhepherd; and it is but a comment upon the text; therefore being parallel places, they may help our memories: "I will feed them in good paſtures upon the high mountains of Iſrael, there ſhall their fold be, there ſhall they ly in a good field, in a fat paſture: I will feed my flock, and cauſe them to ly down, ſaith the Lord God; I will ſeek that which is loſt, and bring back that which is driven away; I will bind up that which was broken, and ſtrengthen that which is ſick, and deſtroy the fat and the ſtrong, and feed them with judgment." Thoſe that are Chriſt's true ſheep have ſomething to complain of; either they are ſick, or broken, or driven away, ſomewhat is amiſs or other; but Chriſt's care preventeth all the neceſſities of his ſheep, he hath a fit ſalve for all their ſores. And (to apply this to the buſineſs in hand), doth not Chriſt feed us among the lillies? doth he not now feed us with his own body and blood in the ſacrament? would you have better

ter food? "My body is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed," that is, it is the only meat and drink that our ſouls could feed upon. God gave his Son to death to ſhed his blood for ſins. What would become of the hunger-bitten thirſty ſoul, that is ſtung with Satan and his temptations, were it not for the blood of Chriſt to quench our thirſt, and the body of Chriſt given to us for ſin; were it not that the ſoul could think on this, where were the comfort of the ſoul? All this is repreſented to us here in the ſacrament; we feed upon the body and blood of Chriſt ſpiritually, and are refreſhed thereby, as verily as our bodies are refreſhed with the bread and wine. For God doth not feed us with empty ſymbols and repreſentations, but with things themſelves, that the ſoul which comes prepared by faith, is partaker of Chriſt crucified, and is knit to him, though now in heaven. There is as ſure an union between Chriſt and the chriſtian ſoul, as there is between the food and the body, when it is once digeſted.

Therefore let us come to this bleſſed, to this ſweet food of our ſouls, with hungry appetites, and thankful hearts, that God hath given us the beſt comforts of his word, and fed us with the ſweet comfort of the ſacrament, as a ſeal of the word. We ſhould even ſpend our lives much in thankfulneſs to God for this, that he will feed us ſo ſweetly, that he thinks nothing is good enough for our food, but his own ſelf, with his own gracious word and truth. Thus we ſhould be very thankful unto God; and now at this time labour to get hungry appetites fit for this bleſſed food, to receive it.

How ſhall we do that?

1. Think ſeriouſly of the former part of thy life: For Chriſt, the food of the ſoul, reliſheth well with the ſour herbs of repentance. Let us ſtir up in our hearts repentance for our ſins, and ſorrow in the conſideration of our own corrupt nature and life; and when we have felt our corruptions, and have the ſenſe of our wants, then Chriſt will be ſweet to us; the paſchal lamb was to be eaten with four herbs, ſo Chriſt, our paſſover, muſt be eaten with repentance.

2. Then withal there muſt be purging—there are many things which clog the ſtomach. Come not with worldly, wicked, malicious affections, which puff up the ſoul; "but lay aſide (as the apoſtle wiſheth) all guile, malice, and ſuperfluity;" empty the ſoul of all ſin and prepoſſeſſing thoughts and affections.

3. And then conſider the neceſſity of ſpiritual ſtrength—that we have need to grow up more and more in chriſtianity, to be feeding ſtill. We have need of ſtrong faith, and ſtrong aſſurance that Chriſt is ours, and that we are his. Let us often frequent this ordinance, and come prepared as we ſhould; and we ſhall find Chriſt making good his own ordinance in his own beſt time; ſo as we ſhall be able to ſay, in truth of heart, experimentally and feelingly, with the church, "My beloved is mine, and I am his, he feedeth among the lillies."

THE

A FOUNTAIN SEALED;

OR,

THE DUTY OF THE SEALED TO THE SPIRIT,

AND THE

WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN SEALING.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

SEVERAL SERMONS.

EPHES. iv. 30.

"*And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are ſealed unto* "*the day of redemption.*"

WHETHER the words be a command enſuing from authority or counſel, from wiſdom, or a caution from God's care of our ſouls, it is not material; conſidering that counſels and cautions of the great God, have both the force of a command, with ſome mixture of the ſweetneſs of love. The apoſtle, as his manner is, from the largeneſs of his ſpirit, riſeth from a particular diſſuaſive from corrupt communication, in the verſe before, to this general advice of not grieving God's ſpirit by ſin, eſpecially againſt conſcience enlightened: and this diſſuaſive from evil is enforced from the dangerous effect of grieving the ſpirit of God; and the danger of grieving ariſeth from this, that it is the ſpirit of God, and God himſelf whom we grieve, and a holy ſpirit, holy in himſelf, and holy as the cauſe of all holineſs in us; and he, after he hath wrought holineſs in us, ſealeth and confirmeth us in that act of grace, until the day of our glorious redemption: ſo that the grounds of not grieving

grieving are from the greatneſs and goodneſs of the perſon whom we grieve, and from the greatneſs and conſtancy of the benefits we have by him. To ſpeak ſomething of the perſon: the holy Spirit is called a ſpirit, not only by nature, as being a ſpiritual eſſence, but in regard of his perſon and office, he is both breathed from the Father and the Son, as proceeding from them both; and, by office, breatheth into all that God hath given Chriſt to redeem, and him to ſanctify; ſo he is the ſpirit of God in proceeding from God, as that he is God, which whoſo denieth, deny their own baptiſm; being as well baptiſed into the name of the Holy Ghoſt, as into the Father, and the Son; and no leſs a perſon than God, is needful to aſſure our ſouls of God's love, and to change our nature, being in an oppoſite frame. Who can reveal to us the mind of God, but the ſpirit of God? and herein we may ſee the joint forwardneſs both of the Father and Son and Holy Ghoſt, when both Father and Son join in willingneſs to ſend ſo great a perſon to apply for us, and to aſſure us of that great good the Father hath decreed, and the Son performed for us.

The attribute the ſpirit delights in, is that of holineſs, which our corrupt nature leaſt delights in, and moſt oppoſeth. Holineſs is the glory and crown of all other excellency; without which, they are neither good in themſelves, nor comfortable to us. It implies a freedom from all impurity, a perfect hatred of it; an abſolute perfection of all that is excellent. What is it then to grieve ſuch a holy ſpirit, before whom the heavens themſelves are impure, and not only the devils tremble, but the angels cover their faces? what ſhall we think then of them who do not only neglect, but deſpiſe, yea oppoſe this holineſs, and endure any thing elſe? What is hated in the world with keen and perfect hatred, but holineſs, without which, yet, we ſhall never ſee God, nor enter into that pure place, into which we all profeſs a deſire to enter? There was planted in man by nature a deſire of holineſs, and a deſire of happineſs: the deſire of happineſs is left ſtill in us, but for holineſs, which is the perfection of the image of God in us, it is both loſt, and the deſire of it extinguiſhed. And that men might the better drive it out of the world under a form and ſhow of it, they oppoſe the truth of it, and that with the greater ſucceſs, becauſe under that great colour, the devil and his vicar, carry all their deviliſh policies under a ſhow of holineſs. We ſee in popery, every thing is holy with them, but that which ſhould be holy, the truth of God, and the expreſſion of it. The man of ſin himſelf,

ſelf, muſt have no worſe title than his Holineſs. A ſhow of deviſed holineſs pleaſeth man's nature well enough, as being glorious for appearance, and uſeful for ends. But the truth of it, being croſs to the whole corrupt nature of man, will never be entertained, until his nature be new moulded by the holy ſpirit, in the uſe of holy means, ſanctified by God for that end: it is this that makes a man a ſaint, and moral virtues to be graces, which raiſeth things that are otherwiſe common, to an higher degree of excellency: this is that to a chriſtian which exerciſe is to a man; it gives him a being and a beauty different from all other; it makes every action we do in obedience to God a ſervice, and puts a religious reſpect on all our actions, directing them to the higheſt end.

Now that which the apoſtle diſſuades from, is from grieving ſo holy a ſpirit. Theſe truths are preſuppoſed; First, that the Holy Ghoſt is not only in us eſſentially, for ſo he is in all creatures; neither perſonally, as the ſecond perſon is in Chriſt man; for then the Holy Ghoſt and we ſhould make one perſon: nor yet is he in us only by ſtirring up holy motions, but he is in us myſtically, and as temples dedicated to himſelf. Chriſt's human nature is the firſt temple, wherein the ſpirit dwells; and then we become temples by union with him. The difference betwixt his being in Chriſt and us, is, that the ſpirit dwells in Chriſt in a fuller meaſure; by reaſon that as a head he is to convey ſpirit into all his members. Secondly, The ſpirit is in Chriſt entirely, without any thing to oppoſe: the ſpirit always finds ſomething in us, that is not his own, but ready to croſs him. Thirdly, The ſpirit is in us derivatively from Chriſt; as a fountain we receive grace at ſecond hand, anſwerable to grace in him. The Holy Ghoſt was in Adam before his fall, as third perſon immediately; but now he is in Chriſt, firſt, and then for Chriſt in us, as members of that body, whereof Chriſt is the head: and it is well for us that he dwells firſt in Chriſt, and then in us: for from this it is that his communion with us is inſeparable, as it is from Chriſt himſelf, with whom the ſpirit makes us one. The holy ſpirit dwells in thoſe that are Chriſt's, after another manner than in others in whom he is, in ſome ſort, by common gifts; but in his own, he is in them as holy, and as making them holy, as the ſoul is in the whole body, in regard of divers operations; but in the head only as it underſtandeth; and from thence ruleth the whole body: ſo the holy Ghoſt is in his, in regard of more noble operations: and his perſon is together

gether with his working, though not perſonally: and though the whole man be the temple of the Holy Ghoſt, yet the ſoul eſpecially, and in the ſoul the very ſpirit of our minds, as moſt ſuitable to him, being a ſpirit. Whence the apoſtle wiſhes the grace of Chriſt to be with our ſpirits. The beſt of ſpirits delight moſt in the beſt of us, which is our ſpirits. In the temple, the further they went, all was more holy, till they came to the holy of holies. So in a chriſtian, the moſt inward part, the ſpirit is, as it were, the holy of holies, where incenſe is offered continually. What a mercy is this, that he who hath the heaven of heavens to dwell in, will make a dungeon to be a temple, a priſon to be a paradiſe; yea, a hell to be a heaven? Next to the love of Chriſt in taking our nature, and dwelling in it, we may wonder at the love of the Holy Ghoſt, that will take up his reſidence in ſuch defiled ſouls.

The ſecond thing pre-ſuppoſed, is, that the holy ſpirit being in us, after he hath prepared us for an houſe to himſelf to dwell in, and to take up his reſt and delight in, he doth alſo become unto us a counſellor in all our doubts, a comforter in all diſtreſſes, a ſolicitor to all duty, a guide in the whole courſe of our life, until we dwell with him for ever in heaven; unto which his dwelling here in us doth tend: he goeth before us as Chriſt did in the pillar of the cloud and fire before the Iſraelites in Canaan, being a defence by day, and a direction by night. When we ſin, what do we elſe but grieve this guide?

The third ground is, that we, even the beſt of us, are prone to grieve this holy ſpirit; what uſe were there elſe for a caution? We carry too good a proof of this in our hearts: we have that which is enmity to the ſpirit in us, and an adverſary to the ſpirit and us without us; theſe joining together, and having intelligence, and holding correſpondence one with another, ſtirs us up to that which grieves this good ſpirit.

The fourth thing preſuppoſed, is, that we may, and ought, by chriſtian care and circumſpection, ſo to walk in an even and pleaſing courſe, that we may not grievouſly offend the ſpirit, or grieve our own ſpirits. We may avoid many laſhes and blows, and many a heavy day which we may thank ourſelves for: and God delighteth in the proſperity of his children, and would have us walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghoſt; and is grieved when we grieve him, that then he muſt grieve us to pre-

in

vent worſe grief. The due and proper act of a chriſtian in this life, is to pleaſe Chriſt, and to be comfortable in himſelf; and ſo to be fitted for all ſervices.

Theſe things premiſed it is eaſy to conceive the equity of the apoſtle's diſſuaſive from grieving the holy ſpirit. For the better unfolding of which, we will unfold theſe four points: 1ſt, What it is to grieve the ſpirit. 2dly, Wherein we ſpecially grieve the ſpirit. Thirdly, When we may know when we have grieved the ſpirit. Fourthly, What courſe we ſhould take to prevent this grief.

For the firſt: The Holy Ghoſt cannot properly be grieved in his own perſon; becauſe grief implies a defect of happineſs, in ſuffering that which we wiſh removed. It implies a defect in foreſight, to prevent that which may grieve. It implies paſſion, which is ſoon raiſed up, and ſoon laid down. God is not ſubject to change. It implies ſome want of power to remove that which we feel to be a grievance: and therefore it is not beſeeming the majeſty of the ſpirit thus to be grieved. We muſt therefore conceive of it as befitting the majeſty of God, removing in our thoughts all imperfections. Firſt, then, we are ſaid to grieve God, when we do that which is apt of itſelf to grieve: as we are ſaid to deſtroy our weak brother, when we do that which, he taking offence at, is apt to miſlead him, and ſo to deſtroy him. Secondly, when we do that whereupon the ſpirit doth that which grieved perſons do; that is, retireth and ſheweth diſlike, and returns grief again. Thirdly, though the paſſion of grief be not in the Holy Ghoſt, yet there is in his holy nature, a pure diſpleaſure and hatred of ſin, with ſuch a degree of abomination, that though it tend not to the deſtruction of the offender, yet to ſharp correction: ſo that grief is eminently in this hatred of God, in ſuch manner as becomes him. Fourthly, we may conceive of the ſpirit as he is in himſelf in heaven, and as he dwells and works in us, as we may conceive of God the Father, as hidden in himſelf, and as revealed in his ſon, and in his word; and as we may conceive of Chriſt as the ſecond perſon, and as incarnate: ſo likewiſe of the Holy Ghoſt, as in himſelf, and as in us, God, in the perſon of his Son: and his Son as man, and as miniſter of circumciſion, was grieved at the rebellion and deſtruction of his own people. The holy ſpirit, as in us, grieveth with us, witneſſeth with us, rejoiceth

rejoiceth in us, and with us; and the ſpirit in himſelf, and as he worketh in us, hath the ſame name as the gifts and graces; and the comforts of the ſpirit are called the ſpirit; even as the beams of the ſun ſhining on the earth are called the ſun: and when we let them in, or ſhut them out, we ſaid to let in or ſhut out the ſun. We may grieve the ſpirit, when we grieve him, as working grace, and offering comfort to us. The graces of the ſpirit have the name of the ſpirit whence they come, as the ſpirit of love and wiſdom. Again, our own ſpirits, ſo far as ſanctified, are ſaid to be the ſpirit of God. So the ſpirit of God, not in itſelf, but in Noah, did ſtrive with the old world; and ſo we grieve the ſpirit, when we grieve our own, or other men's ſpirits, ſo far as they are ſanctified by the ſpirit.

Now the ſpirit as in us, worketh in us, according to the principles of man's nature, as underſtanding and free creatures, and preſerveth the free manner of working proper to man; and doth not always put forth an almighty prerogative power; but dealeth with us by way of gentle and ſweet motions and perſuaſions; and leaveth it in our freedom to embrace or refuſe theſe inferior works of the ſpirit: and our hearts tell us, it is in our power to entertain or reject the motions; which, when we do in our own apprehenſion, we churliſhly offend the ſpirit, as willing to draw us to better ways; and we cannot otherwiſe judge of this, but as grieving. God, in his dealing with men, puts his cauſe into our hand, that, by our prayers, and otherwiſe, we may help and hinder him againſt the mighty. And Chriſt puts himſelf into our hands in his miniſters, and in the poor; counts himſelf regarded or neglected in them; ſo the holy ſpirit puts, as it were, his delight in and contentment in our power, and counts, when we entertain his motions of grace and comfort, we entertain him; and when we refuſe them, we grieve him. And the Holy Ghoſt will have us interpret our refuſing of his motions, to be a refuſing him; and not only a refuſing of him, but of the Son, and of the Father, whoſe ſpirit he is. Oh, if we did but conſider how high the ſlighting of a gracious motion reaches, even to the ſlighting of God himſelf, it would move us to give more regard unto them; as we uſe them, ſo would we uſe the ſpirit himſelf, if he were in our power. They are not only the ambaſſadors, but the royal offspring of the ſpirit in us; and when we offer violence to them, we kill, as much as in us lieth, the royal ſeed of the ſpirit.

Object.—It may be objected, when we do any thing amiſs, we

we intend not the grieving of the spirit. It is true, unless we were devils incarnate, we will not purposely and directly grieve the spirit; but when we sin, we will the grieving of him in the cause. No man hates his own soul, or is in love with death, yet men will willingly do that, which, if they hated their own souls, and loved death, they could not do worse. "Why will you perish, O house of Israel," saith God. They intended no such matter as perishing: God's meaning is, why will you go on in such destructive courses as must end in perishing? If we could hate hell in the cause of it, and way to it, as we hate it in itself, we would never come there.

For the second point, wherein we especially grieve the spirit: Grief ariseth either from antipathy and contrariety, or from disunion of things naturally joined together. In greater persons especially, grief ariseth from any indignity offered from neglect or disrespect, and especially from unkindness after favour shewn. Thus the Holy Ghost is grieved by us: what more contrary to holiness than sin, which is the thing, and the only thing that God abominates, yea in the devil himself; but then add to the contrariety in sin, the aggravations from unkindness, and this makes sin more sinful. What greater indignity can we offer to the holy spirit, than to prefer base dust before his motions, leading us to holiness and happiness? what greater unkindness, yea, treachery, to leave the directions of a friend to follow the counsel of an enemy? such as, when they know God's will, yet will consent with flesh and blood, like Balaam, who was swayed by his profit against a clear discovery of God's will. We cannot but make the spirit of God in us, in some sort ashamed, to think of our folly in leaving the fountain, and digging cisterns; in leaving a true guide, and following the pirate. Men are grieved especially, when they are disrespected in their place and office. It is the office of the spirit to enlighten, to soften, to quicken, and to sanctify; when we give consent to Satan, it puts the Holy Ghost out of office. The office of the Holy Ghost is likewise to be a comforter: it cannot therefore but grieve the holy spirit, when the consolations of the Almighty are either forgotten, or seem nothing unto us in the pettishness of our spirits; when with Rachel we will not be comforted; when, instead of wrestling with God by prayer, wrangle with him by cavilling objections: they take pleasure to move objections instead of a holy submission to higher reasons that might raise them to comfort; who take Satan's part against the holy spirit, and their own spirit; and against arguments

ments that are miniſtered by thoſe who are more ſkilful in the ways of ſalvation than themſelves. How little beholden is the holy ſpirit to ſuch, who pleaſe themſelves in a ſpirit of oppoſition? and yet, ſo kind is this holy ſpirit, that he overcomes many of theſe with his goodneſs, and makes them at length, with ſhame, lay their hands upon their mouth, and be ſilent. Yet that is one reaſon they ſtick ſo long in temptations, and are kept ſo long under the ſpirit of bondage. Thoſe likewiſe cannot but grieve the comforter, that leave his comforts, and ſeek for other comforters: that think there is not comfort enough in religion, but will be beholden to the world: ſuch as linger after the liberties of the fleſh, after ſtolen waters, as if God kept a houſe not good enough for them: it is a great diſparagement to prefer husks before the proviſion of our Father's houſe, and to die like fiſh out of their proper element, if we want carnal comforts. But above all, they grieve the ſpirit moſt that have the deepeſt acquaintance with the ſpirit: where the ſpirit hath gone furtheſt in his favours, when the Holy Ghoſt comes in love, and we have given way to him to enlighten our underſtanding, and into our affections, that we have taſted of the good things of God, that the promiſes are ſweet, and the goſpel is good. When we have given way to the ſpirit; then to uſe him unkindly, this grieves the ſpirit, and this makes the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſo deſperate, becauſe there hath been ſo ſtrong a conviction and illumination. Therefore of all ſins, the ſins of profeſſors of religion grieve the ſpirit moſt; and of all profeſſors, thoſe who have moſt means of knowledge: becauſe their obligations are deeper, and their engagements greater: the deeper the affection hath entered, the grief muſt needs be the greater in unlooſing; the offence of friends grieves more than the injuries of enemies: and therefore the ſins which offend God moſt, are committed within the church; where is the greateſt ſin of all, the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, committed? never out of the church, but within the church, where there is the greateſt light, and the greateſt means: amongſt his own people, where the Holy Ghoſt, hath not only ſet up a light, but given a taſte of heavenly things; and yet we, upon falſe allurements, will grow to a diſtaſte: it cannot but grieve the holy ſpirit. And this cauſeth another grief, when thoſe that are good, watch not over their ways; the ſpirit is grieved for the reproaches of religion that come from the wicked: for what ſay they? doth religion and the ſpirit teach you this? thus Chriſtians make the name of God

be

be ill ſpoken of, and this grieves the ſpirit, and will grieve them, if they belong to God. Oh, wretch that I am, that I ſhould open the mouths of others, and grieve the ſpirit of God! not only in myſelf, but in others, becauſe he is grieved by me; eſpecially if it grow to malicious oppoſing, for there can be nothing to excuſe it: the malice of the will makes the ſin of the deeper dye; and it is contrary to the Spirit, as the ſpirit is a ſpirit of goodneſs, and thereupon preſumptuous ſins muſt likewiſe grieve the ſpirit; when we will abuſe the ſweeteſt attribute of God's ſpirit, his goodneſs, and therefore evil, becauſe he is good; and turn his grace to wantonneſs, the ſin of this age. Sins againſt knowledge are either ſuch as are directly againſt knowledge, as when we will not underſtand what we ſhould do, becauſe we will not do what we underſtand; ſuch as put out the candle, that they may ſin with the more freedom; this ignorance doth not free from ſin, but increaſeth it: thoſe who will not hear the word, and read good books, leſt their conſciences ſhould be awakened; this affected ignorance increaſeth the voluntarineſs. Again, when we maintain untruths for any advantage, knowing them to be untruths, as many learned papiſts cannot but do. What a great indignity is it to the ſpirit of God, to ſell the truth, which we ſhould buy with the loſs of our lives; and to prefer the pleaſing of a baſe man, or ſome gain to ourſelves, before a beam of God? Other ſins, if we know them to be ſins, are ſins againſt knowledge, as collaterally: yet this will be the chief aggravation, when our conſciences are once awakened, not ſo much that we have ſinned, as that we have ſinned againſt the light, when the will hath nothing to plead for itſelf, but itſelf; it would, becauſe it would, though it knew the contrary. Involuntarineſs takes away ſomething of the heinouſneſs of ſin, when there is ignorance, perturbation, or paſſion, there is leſs ſin, and leſs grieving of the ſpirit: but when there are none of theſe, and a man will ſin becauſe he will, accounting it a kind of ſovereignty of his will, this will prove the moſt miſerable condition: for not to have the will regulated by him that is the chiefeſt good, will end in deſperation.

Queſt.—Why are voluntary ſins ſo great, and ſo much grieve the Spirit of God?

Anſ.—When there is paſſion, there is ſome colour for ſin; as profit, pleaſure, fear to diſpleaſe, &c. When there is ignorance, there is a want of that which might help the underſtanding; but

when there are none of theſe, and a man willingly ſins, he is more directly carried againſt the command and will of God: there is nothing ſtands between: yet he accounts it ſo ſmall a matter, that he will do it without any provocation, out of a ſlight eſteem of the good pleaſure and will of God. As common ſwearers, can they plead ignorance? they know the commandment, "God will not hold him guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain:" can they plead perturbation? they do it oft for a brag, when they are not urged: there is no engagement in that ſin, of profit or pleaſure, but a voluntary ſuperfluity of pride. You ſhall know that they are men that care not for God himſelf; let God and his miniſters take it as they will, though I have no pleaſure or profit by it, yet I will have my liberty. The heart that hath been thus wicked, will hardly admit of comfort when it ſtands in need of it. We are not ſaid to be ill, because we know ill, but because we will and conſent to ill; it is the will that makes up the bargain, ſin were not ſin elſe. God hath given us the cuſtody of our own ſouls, and as long as we keep the keys faithfully, and betray not our ſouls to Satan, ſo long we poſſeſs our own ſouls, and our comfort: but when he ſuggeſts, Do this, or Speak this; and we conſent, he takes full and free poſſeſſion of us, as much as in us lies, and God in judgement, ſaith Amen to it; he ſaith, Take him ſatan, ſince he will not have my ſpirit to rule him, it is fit he ſhould have a worſe. The more willingneſs the more ſinfulneſs, and the leſs defence; and God's juſtice cannot better be ſatisfied, than by puniſhing them moſt againſt their wills who ſinned moſt with their will. The clearer the light is, and the more advantage it hath, the more we ſin in this reſpect: ſins againſt the ſecond table grieve more than ſins againſt the firſt, because here the conſcience is more awakened, theſe are ſins againſt a multiplied light, againſt the light of nature, light of word and ſpirit. And ſuch ſins are contrary to human ſociety, they diſſolve the bonds of that which nature, even by the common relicks it hath left, ſtudies to maintain: for though corrupt nature hath no good in it, but we deſerve to be like devils, yet God intends to have civil ſociety, out of which he will gather his church; therefore he preſerves in man's nature, a hatred of ſins that overthrow ſociety; they being committed againſt more light, wound more: as in caſe of murder, notorious perjury, theft, &c. Therefore God oft gives up men, upon breach of the firſt table, to breaches of the ſecond, that ſo they may come to more grief, and ſhame, as being the breach of both tables:

men

men never fall into the breach of the ſecond table, but upon breach of the firſt: No man deſpiſeth man's law but he deſpiſeth God's law firſt; and no man breaks the law of nature but he deſpiſeth the God of nature. Profane atheiſtical perſons that glory in the breach of the third commandment by ſwearing, God meets with them by giving them over to groſs abominable ſins of the ſecond table; which vexeth them more (though they ſhould not) than ſins againſt the firſt table, expoſing them, beſides inward grief, to open ſhame; then God opens conſcience to tell them, not only that they are to blame for their groſs ſins, but for the root of them, ſins againſt the firſt table; atheiſm, profaneneſs and looſeneſs. This is an aggravation of ſins againſt knowledge. When knowledge is helped and ſtrengthened by education, by example of others running into our eyes, which is a more familiar teaching than that of rule, and ſtrengthened by obſervation and experience of ourſelves; and againſt a taſte joined with light; againſt a former ſtrength we have had; againſt the ſin we now commit. None are worſe than thoſe that have been good, and are naught, and might be good, and will be naught. When there is more deliberation and foreknowledge of the dangerous iſſue, joined with the warning of others. As Reuben ſaid unto the reſt of his brethren, "Spake I not unto you?" &c. ſo may God's Spirit, and conſcience, ſay to men, did not I acquaint you with the danger of ſin? you are now in miſery, and terrors of conſcience, but did you not ſlight former admonitions, and helps, and means? conſcience is an inferior light of the ſpirit: to do things againſt conſcience, is to do them againſt the ſpirit. Saint Auſtin ſaith well, God ſpake to me, and I heeded him not. How doth God ſpeak? When conſcience ſpeaks, and ſaith this is good, this is bad: then God ſpeaks, conſcience hath ſomewhat divine in it: it is a petty god, it ſpeaks from God; eſpecially when the ſpirit joins with conſcience, then God ſpeaks indeed, then there is light upon light.

Upon divers reſpects ſome ſin may grieve more or leſs than another: as the Holy Ghoſt is a ſpirit, ſo ſpiritual ſins grieve moſt, as pride, envy; as imprinting upon the ſoul a character of the contrary ill ſpirit; carnal ſins, whereby the ſoul is drowned in delights of the body, may more grieve the ſpirit in another reſpect, as defiling his temple, and as taking away ſo much of the ſoul of love and delight, carrying the ſoul with them; and the more deeply it enters into the creature, beſides the defilement, the leſs ſtrength it hath to ſpiritual duties. Grace is ſeat-

ed in the powers of nature, now carnal ſins diſable the powers of nature, and ſo ſet us at a greater diſtance from grace, as taking away the heart, Hoſea iv. Hereupon the apoſtle puts being filled with wine, contrary to being filled with the ſpirit. And hence it is the apoſtle forbids, in the former words, unclean communication. The holy ſpirit is a ſpirit of truth, hates hypocrites as painted ſepulchres; but as a ſpirit of purity, hates foul livers, and foul-mouthed ſpeakers, as open ſepulchres. They cannot, therefore, but much grieve the ſpirit, that feed corrupt luſts, and ſtudy to give contentment to the fleſh, and pay tribute to the fleſh, to which they owe no ſervice, and are no debtors; and by ſowing to which, we can reap nothing but corruption. When our thoughts are exerciſed to content the outward man, to contrive for the things of the world only, this is to pay tribute of the ſtrength and vigour of our affections to the utter enemy of God's ſpirit, and our own ſouls: when our thoughts run ſo deeply into earthly things, that we become one with them. Who will think himſelf well entertained in a houſe, when there ſhall be entertainment given to his greateſt enemy with him, and ſhall ſee more regard had, and better countenance ſhewed to his enemy, than to him? when the motions of corrupt nature are more regarded than the motions of the ſpirit? The wiſdom of the ſpirit which is from above, is firſt pure, and maketh us ſo, and raiſeth the ſoul upward to things above. Chriſtians, indeed, have their failings; but if a true chriſtian examine himſelf, his heart will ſay, that every day he intends the glory of God, and the good of the ſtate he lives in. He hath a larger heart than a baſe worldling, that keeps within the ſphere of himſelf, ſpending all his thoughts there, and conſults only with fleſh and blood, with profit and pleaſure, to hear what they ſay. Baſeneſs of ſpirit cannot but grieve the ſpirit, as contrary to our hopes and heavenly calling.

It is a dangerous grieving of the ſpirit, when inſtead of drawing ourſelves to the ſpirit, we will labour to draw the ſpirit to us; when men ſtudy the ſcriptures to countenance them in ſome corrupt courſe, and labour to make God of their mind, that they may go on with the greater liberty. When men get to themſelves teachers after their own luſts, as many do, (eſpecially if they be in place) Ahab ſhall not want his four hundred falſe prophets: when men cut the rule and ſtandard to fit them, and not fit themſelves for it. You have ſome that are reſolved what to do, and yet will be aſking counſel, and if they have an anſwer

to

to their minds, then they reſt; if not, then their anſwer is, This is your judgement, but others are of a contrary opinion: and thus they labour to make the ſpirit of God in his miniſters to ſerve their turn: ſo did the Jews in Jeremiah's time. Some will father thoſe ſinful affections that ariſe from the fleſh, and are ſtrengthened by ſatan, upon the holy ſpirit; counting wrath, that is kindled from hell, to be the fire of holy zeal coming from heaven. Thus the enemies of religion think they do God ſervice in their maſſacres; ſuch are thoſe that think revenge to be juſtice; yea, ſuch as oppoſe the ways of God, and yet are ready to ſay, Glory be to the Lord; that ſtudy holineſs in the ſhew, that they may overthrow it in the power; ſuch as countenance any ill courſe by religion; ſuch as lay the blame of an uncomfortable life upon religion, when men are therefore uncomfortable, becauſe they are not religious enough. The ways of wiſdom are the ways of pleaſure; this we all are to take notice of, in theſe times, in the ſecond ſpring of the goſpel, that we take heed of ſins againſt the goſpel. Benefits, the greater they are being neglected or abuſed, bring the greater judgement. The office of the holy ſpirit is, by the miniſtry, to lay open the riches of Chriſt, and the glory of God's grace in him: by neglecting ſo great ſalvation, and by thinking this favour of God to be a common favour, we ſin againſt both Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, and in what they deſire moſt to be glorified. Such, therefore, as ſay to the clouds, drop not; and to the winds, blow not; and to the prophets, prophecy not; who ſtudy to keep out the light, and ſin againſt it, as diſcovering them, and awakening them, and hindering them from taking that ſolace in carnal courſes of the world, as opening the eyes of others to know them further than they would be known, and ſo to loſe that reſpect they would have in the hearts of men; this cannot but grieve the ſpirit of God, and move him to take away that truth which we are ſo far from thinking a bleſſing, that we are weary of it, and fret againſt it.

Again, thoſe ſins wherein there is plotting and contriving, exceedingly grieve the ſpirit, becauſe they are done in cold blood. David deeply wounded his conſcience, and grieved the ſpirit, in plotting the death of Uriah, which was the diminution of the credit of David; that the ſcripture ſaith, he was good in all things, except in the matter of Uriah. Why? Becauſe therein he grieved the ſpirit moſt, in plotting and contriving the cruel marder of ſo good a man. How can they think they have the ſpirit of God, who plot and undermine men's eſtates, to have

their wills in unjuſt courſes? Can this be without grieving God's ſpirit, which if they have, will perpetually ſuggeſt the contrary?

The office of the ſpirit is to ſet out Chriſt, and the favour and mercy of God in Chriſt. When we ſlight Chriſt in the goſpel, the ordinance and organ of working good in us, the Holy Ghoſt is ſlighted and grieved. What is our condition by nature? and what a deal of miſery do we add to corrupt nature? Are we not all the children of wrath? and have we not, ſince we were born, added ſin unto ſin? Do we not grow in ſin as we do in years? Is not God juſt, and hell terrible? Now God, out of infinite mercy, having provided a way to free us from the danger of ſin, and not only ſo, but to advance us to life everlaſting; and that we ſhould not be ignorant of what he hath done for us, he hath ſet up an ordinance wherein the Holy Ghoſt diſcovers his love; when we ſlight this, and account it but an ordinary favour, nay, rather a burden, and think the opening of divine myſteries things that may be ſpared; that there is too much preaching, and what needs all this ado? This grieves the ſpirit, whoſe office is to lay open the unſearchable riches of Chriſt, the infinite and glorious mercy and goodneſs of God in Chriſt, wherein God hath ſet himſelf, in all his attributes, to triumph and be glorified. We grieve all the ſacred Trinity: God the Father is grieved to ſee his mercy ſlighted; God the Son, to ſee his blood accounted common; and God the Holy Ghoſt, whoſe office it is to diſcover theſe things. This is the common ſin of the times and kingdom, which threateneth judgement more than any thing elſe. When the goſpel, the bleſſed truth of ſalvation, is publiſhed, the axe is laid to the root of the tree, the inſtrument of deſtruction, when men walk not worthy of it, and entertain Chriſt, and the mercy of God in the goſpel as they ſhould. The blood-red horſe followeth the white horſe, Rev. vi. 4. The white horſe is the publiſhing of the goſpel, when God ſets himſelf to glorify himſelf in mercy, in the greateſt benefits, and we account them nothing, or but common favours. The red horſe of blood and deſtruction follows: God removes the candleſtick: And indeed what man will endure his greateſt favours and kindneſſes to be ſlighted?

Now a degree in grieving the ſpirit this way is, when men will not be thoroughly convinced of their own ſinful condition, and of the infinite love and mercy of God in Chriſt in the pardoning of them. If God, by his ſpirit, in the miniſtry, or in a particular reproof, come to men, and diſcover their natural condition, and tell

tell them they are worſe than they take themſelves to be, they will oppoſe it, and ſtudy revenge; as St. Paul ſaith, "Am I become your enemy, becauſe I tell you the truth?" This muſt needs grieve the ſpirit.

Again, the holy ſpirit is grieved, when you have a corrupt judgment of things, not weighing them in the right balance, nor valuing them according to their worth. When we eſteem any knowledge rather than divine knowledge, any truths but ſublime and divine truths that concern Chriſt, thoſe are too high, too ſpiritual; when men look upon grace as contemptible, and prefer other things, tuſh, holineſs gives us gifts and parts. Alas! what are all gifts and parts without a gracious heart? Have not the devils greater parts than any man? Are they not called Daemons, from the largeneſs of their underſtandings? If parts and gifts were beſt, the devils were better than we. What an indignity is this to the holy ſpirit, to think it better to be accounted witty and politic, than to be holy and gracious?

Again, we grieve the holy ſpirit in the commiſſion of thoſe ſins that we may avoid with leaſt danger, that we have ſome helps againſt, and leaſt provocation unto. It is a general rule, *Quanto major facilitas, &c.* The more the facility of not ſinning, the greater the ſin. Therefore when we are tempted to ſin, conſider what conſcience and God's ſpirit ſay: I have been a hearer of the word, what hath the ſpirit of God revealed and diſcovered unto me? He hath ſhewed that this is a ſin. Whom do I grieve by the commiſſion of it? The ſpirit of God, and wound my own conſcience. Will that which I ſin for, countervail that? Do I not buy him too dear? Sins are dearly bought with the grieving of the ſpirit of God. Therefore wiſely think beforehand what ſin will coſt.

Men grieve the ſpirit, by cavilling againſt the truth. The heathen man could ſay, It is an ill cuſtom to be cavilling againſt religion, whether in good earneſt or in jeſt: Yet we have a ſect, a generation of men that are of all religions, of no religion; men of a contradictory ſpirit, that always take the oppoſite part; that cavil at the truth to ſhew their wit and parts, which is ordinary among the wits of the world. This grieves the holy ſpirit.

When men take the office of the ſpirit from him, it grieves the ſpirit; that is, when we will do things in our own ſtrength, and by our own light, as if we were gods to ourſelves. Man natu-

rally affects a kind of divinity, (it was the fault of Adam) and till God drive him out of himself by his spirit, and by afflictions, he values too much his own parts and wit, and thereupon neglects prayer and dependence on God, as if the spirit had nothing to do with his guidance. When men set upon actions in the strength of natural parts, perhaps they may go on in their course as civil men; but never as christians, to have comfort of their actions, because they will be guides and gods to themselves. If a man belong to God, God will cross him in such ways wherein he refuseth to honour God, and to give him his due place. He shall miscarry when, perhaps, other men shall have success, tho' it be to harden them to destruction. This is a subtile way by which satan abuseth men. The life of a christian is dependent on an higher principle than himself, to rule and guide him.

Another way whereby we commonly grieve the spirit of God is, when the mind is troubled with a multitude of business; when the soul is like a mill, where one cannot hear another; or like a house, where a friend is entertained, where the noise is such as takes away all intercourse. It diminisheth our respect to the holy spirit, when we give way to a multitude of business: For multitude of business begets multitudes of passions and distractions; that when God's spirit dictates the best things that tend to our comfort and peace, we have no time to heed what the spirit adviseth. Therefore we should so moderate our occasions and affairs, that we may be always ready for good suggestions.—If a man will be lost, let him lose himself in Christ, and in the things of heaven; for if we be drowned in the world, it will breed discomfort.

Lastly, omission, or slight performance of duties, grieve the spirit. The spirit, as he comes from the Father, and the Son, from God, so he is great in himself, being God. "Offer this to thy King," saith Malachi, when he saw them come negligently and carelessly to the worship of God. When people hear drowsily and carelessly, and receive the sacrament in an unprepared state, this grieves the spirit, because it comes from irreverence and disrespect. And the ground that so many are dead hearted is, because they make no conscience of omissions, of drowsiness, of negligent cold performances. The best christian is the most reverend christian, the most careful christian, most jealous over his own heart; usually those that are richest in grace, are most watchful over their own hearts and ways. What

is

is the difference between a cold chriſtian and another man? others come to hear the word for faſhion, or to judge and cenſure perhaps, without reverence to divine things. Even among good men, thoſe that are moſt careful and watchful over themſelves, they go away enriched with the greateſt bleſſing. Therefore let us hear, and ſo hear; let us receive, and receive thus, "So let us eat of this bread," &c. The Scripture fixeth a reverend reſpect before duty, ſuitable to the majeſty of the great God, whoſe buſineſs we are about.

Beſides grieving God's ſpirit in ourſelves, there is an heavy guilt lies upon us for grieving the ſpirit in others, which is many ways.

1. By neglecting the grace of God in them.

2. Not only ſo, but by deſpiſing them for ſome infirmities which we ſhould cover. There is none but hath ſomething in them which ſhould raiſe them above contempt, of which the nature is more impatient than any injury; thoſe that are given that way, are puniſhed with common hatred.

3. We likewiſe grieve the ſpirit in others, by ſharp cenſures; the greater our authority is, the deeper is the grief of the cenſure, if it be ſharp. Many weak ſpirits cannot enjoy their quiet under ſuch cenſures, they think themſelves excommunicated out of the hearts of thoſe in whoſe good liking they deſire to dwell.

4. Again, thoſe that are above others, grieve the ſpirits of thoſe under them by unjuſt commands; as when maſters preſs their ſervants to that which their conſcience cannot digeſt; and ſo make them ſin, and offer violence to their own conſcience.

5. Again, we grieve the ſpirits of others by ill example, which always either grieveth or infecteth.

5. Again, by ſcandalous courſes, either by unreaſonable uſe of our liberty, without reſpect to the weakneſs of others, or by actions in themſelves ill; ſo the ſpirit of Lot was grieved for the unclean converſation of the Sodomites, which without doubt, haſtened their ruin.

7. Again, we grieve the ſpirit in others, when thoſe that are inferior ſhew themſelves untractable to thoſe above them in magiſtracy or miniſtry, when they make them ſpend their ſtrength in vain. Thus the ſpirit of God in Noah, ſtrove with the old world.

world. Our duty ſhould be therefore to walk wiſely in regard of others; and if it be a duty to pleaſe men in all things lawful in the way of humanity, much more ought we to pleaſe chriſtians in thoſe things wherein we do not diſpleaſe God, as being joined in communion with them in the ſame ſpirit. Yet here we muſt remember, that it is one thing to croſs the humour, and offend the pride of another, and another to grieve the ſpirit in him. No cures can be wrought without grief in that kind; and if we grieve not their ſpirits, when ſuch humours prevail in them, we ſhall grieve our own for neglect of duty.

How ſhall we know when we grieve the ſpirit? we may know that by the ſins mentioned as the cauſe of grief. Again, the ſpirit will bring report of its own grief; we may know we have offended a friend when he leaves our company, ſo we may know we have diſcontented the ſpirit, by ſpiritual deſertions, both in reſpect of aſſiſtance in the performance of duties, and reſiſting temptations, and bearing afflictions; as alſo in reſpect of comfort, when we find a ſtrangeneſs and dullneſs of diſpoſition.

When we find a proneneſs to turn to other comforts, and to hold correſpondence with carnal perſons; when we enjoy not our former comfort in the communion of ſaints, and find a greater indifference for any acquaintance; when we drive hardly, and our wheels fall off; when conſcience will not let us omit good duties, and yet we want the oil of the ſpirit to make us ſtrong and nimble in the performance of them, whereupon they come not off with that acceptance to God or our own ſpirits. Theſe indiſpoſitions ſhew we have not uſed the ſpirit well, whom otherwiſe we ſhould find a ſpirit of ſtrength, a ſpirit of comfort, a quickening ſpirit.

The conſequences of grieving the ſpirit are very dangerous, for 1. The ſpirit may juſtly leave us to our own ſpirits and deceitful hearts, which, as they are arch-flatterers, ſo will prove arch-traitors to us, and ſo let in a worſe gueſt into our ſouls; even the ſpirit, the ill ſpirit, who is ready preſently to take poſſeſſion, who by joining with the ſtream of our corruptions, may pleaſe us for a time, but deſtroy us for ever.

When we grieve the good ſpirit of God, and cauſe him to leave us; what is the ſoul when the ſpirit is gone, but a hell? what is hell, but the abſence of God, in his favour and mercy?

2. Again, we cannot grieve the ſpirit of God in doing any thing

thing againſt it, but it will grieve us again, and being a ſpirit, may fill our ſpirits with that grief which may make our condition a kind of hell upon earth. Few reprobates feel thoſe terrors here, that the godly often do by their bold adventures, for beſides the terrors of the natural conſcience, they have the ſpirit to ſet them on, and that ſpirit that had ſo well deſerved of them before, which cannot but increaſe their horror and ſhame. In hell itſelf, this will be the bittereſt torment, to think of refuſing mercy, mercy preſſed and offered with ſo much love. A careleſs ſpirit oft proves a wounded ſpirit, and that, "who can bear?" untill he that woundeth healeth again, by giving grace to afflict ourſelves, and wait his good time to take pity on us: that which we ſay of conſcience, it is our beſt friend and worſt enemy. If a man's conſcience be his friend, it will make all friendly to him, it will make God his friend, affliction his friend. Nothing can ſit at the heart to grieve him, but if a man's conſcience turn his enemy, there need no other enemies be ſought out, he hath enow in his own heart, his own tormenting conſcience tearing itſelf; it may be as truly ſaid of the ſpirit of God, if we make him not our beſt friend, we are ſure to have him our worſt enemy that ſets all other enemies upon us. Diſpleaſure is as the perſon is. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; who knows the power of his wrath?" it is a powerful wrath, no creature hath power over the ſpirit immediately, but this ſpirit of ſpirits, who can fill the ſoul, the whole ſoul, every corner of it, with a ſenſe of wrath; being adequate to the ſoul, as large as the ſoul and larger, he can fill it with wrath that ſhall burn to hell, and who ſhall take off the wrath of God, when the ſpirit of God hath ſet it on once?

Queſt.—Whence is it that we grieve the ſpirit?

Anſ.—Becauſe there is a curſed principle in us that is always active, which is not perfectly ſubdued in this life. Death is the accompliſhment of mortification, but while we are here, this corruption in us will always be working. "The fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit:" the fleſh is an active buſy thing, it beſtirs itſelf; now when contraries are ſo near, as the fleſh and ſpirit, in the ſame ſoul, they muſt needs thwart and grieve one another continually.

It may be demanded how far forth a child of God may grieve the ſpirit, and yet remain the child of God?

In

In anſwer to this, know, that we muſt not judge of ſin by the matter in which ſin is committed, but by the ſpirit from which. There is no ſin ſo groſs, but the ſaints of God may fall into it, but yet the child of God is hindered by a contrary law of the ſpirit, from yielding full conſent before, or taking full delight in a ſin, or allowing or perſiſting in it after; and though in regard of ingratitude, the ſin of a godly man admits of a greater aggravation than the ſin of others, yet ſetting that aſide, the ſin itſelf of a godly man is leſs, for his temptations being ſtronger, and ſatan's malice more eager againſt him, the reſiſtance to ſin is greater, all which do abate the heinouſneſs of the guilt. The more reſiſtance from within, argues a ſtronger party from within; in the godly, the force of ſin is broken from within: take a godly man at the worſt, he hath that within him which is a friend to that which is ſpiritual without him; there is ſome work of the ſpirit in him, that in ſome meaſure is anſwerable to the counſels and motions of the ſpirit without him: the holy ſpirit hath ſome hold in him, by which he doth recover him. A wicked man proceeds from grieving to quenching, and from quenching to reſiſting. The ſpirit hath no party, no ſide in him, and therefore when the ſpirit is gone, farewell he; glad they are that then they can follow their pleaſures and ſins without check.

Sometimes God leads his children to heaven through ſome foul way, by which he lets them ſee what need they have of waſhing by the blood of Chriſt, which otherwiſe perhaps they would not ſo much value. When they grieve the ſpirit, and the ſpirit thereupon grieves them, and that grief proves medicinal, the grief which ſin breeds, conſumes the ſin that bred it: we are in covenant with ſo wiſe and powerful a God, that over-rules even ſin itſelf to ſerve his purpoſe in bringing his to heaven: they have that in them whereby they hate the ſin they do, and love the goodneſs they do not; whereas others hate the good in ſome reſpects they do, and love the ill which they dare not commit; howſoever they are drawn into ſin, yet they will never break their conjugal bond betwixt Chriſt and their ſouls, ſo far as that ſin ſhould reign in them as a commanding lord: they will not forſake their oath of allegiance to ſerve willingly a contrary king. They may preſume ſometimes upon Chriſt, thinking they have a balm ready to cure the wound again, as ſome, to ſhew the virtue of their oils, make wounds in themſelves; the deceitfulneſs of ſin ſeducing them: but God ever chaſtiſeth this boldneſs, and taketh

taketh ſuch a courſe with them, that it ends in taking the greater ſhame to themſelves; and the more, by how much they have been more preſumptuous. The loſs of comfort and the ſenſe of ſorrow they feel, makes them ſay from experience, that there is nothing gotten by ſin, but that it proves bitterneſs in the end.

Again, though they are not kept from ſins, in ſome ſenſe preſumptuous, yet they are always kept from that great offence, though they may commit a ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, yet they can never commit the ſin againſt the Holy Spirit, becauſe this is a ſin of malice after ſtrong conviction, expreſſed in words dipt in malice, by a tongue ſet on fire by hell, and in actions coming from an oppoſite ſpirit, and tending to oppoſition and to bitter perſecution, if their malice be not greater than their power, and it ends always in impenitence, by reaſon they deſpiſe that grace whereby they ſhould recover.

And ſecondly, they caſt away that medicine whereby they ſhould recover; their pride will not ſtoop to God's way.

Thirdly, after ſuch fearful relapſes, darkneſs in the underſtanding, and rebellion in the will increaſe, ſin grows ſtronger, and they weaker and weaker to reſiſt.

Fourthly, ſatan being once caſt out by ſome degree of illumination and reformation, brings ſeven devils after, worſe than himſelf; when they ſee their former courſes ſtand not with their luſts and hopes, they take a contrary courſe, and ſo fall to bitterneſs in the end.

There is a double miſcarriage about this ſin. 1. Some are too headlong in their cenſures of others, whereas the greater the ſin is, the greater caution ſhould be in faſtening it upon any, eſpecially thoſe whoſe ſpirits we are not thoroughly acquainted with, conſidering ſo many things muſt meet in this ſin.

2. The ſecond miſcarriage is, in an ungrounded cenſure of ourſelves: there are three things that fear frees us from the danger of; firſt, fear leſt we have committed the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, ſhews we have not committed that ſin, which is never committed but without fear, and with delight. The ſecond is a fear leſt the time of our converſion be paſt, becauſe we have ſo often grieved the ſpirit; whereas, if their time were paſt, they would be given up to a careleſs ſecurity. A third is fear of ſome judgment, which God ſtirs up in the heart to prevent the judgment, that we may not feel what we fear, becauſe fear ſtirs up care,

care, and care ſtirs up diligence to avoid what we fear: in theſe caſes we need fear them leaſt, that fear moſt.

The fourth point is, what courſe we ſhould take to prevent this grieving of the ſpirit?

Let us give up the government of our ſouls to the ſpirit of God; it is for our ſafety ſo to do, as being wiſer than ourſelves, who are unable to direct our own way; it is our liberty to be under a wiſdom and goodneſs larger than our own. Let the ſpirit think in us, deſire in us, pray in us, live in us, do all in us. Labour to be in ſuch a frame as we may be fit for the ſpirit to work upon; as Nazianzen ſays of himſelf, "Lord, I am an inſtrument for thee to touch." A muſical inſtrument, though in tune, ſoundeth nothing unleſs it be touched; let us lay ourſelves open to the ſpirit's touch. Thus, St. Paul lived not, but Chriſt lived in him: this requires a great deal of ſelf-denial, to put ourſelves thus upon the guidance of the ſpirit; but if we knew what enemies we are to ourſelves, it would be no ſuch hard matter.

Secondly, ſtudy to walk perfectly, in obeying the Spirit in all things, which requires much circumſpection in knowing and regarding our ways, and then we ſhall find the ſpirit ready to cloſe with us and tell us, This is the way, walk in it: and upon obedience we ſhall find the ſpirit encouraging us by a ſecret intimation, that this or that is well done. Thus Paul was ſaid to be bound in ſpirit, the ſpirit ſo put him on, that he could not withſtand the motions untill the execution of it. We muſt take eſpecial heed of ſlighting any motion, as being the ſpirit's meſſenger: they are God's ambaſſadors, ſent to make way for God into our hearts, therefore give them entertainment. Many men, rather than they will be troubled with holy motions, ſtifle them in the birth, as harlots, that to avoid the pain of child-birth, kill their fruit in the womb: let us take heed of murdering theſe births of the ſpirit. But ſatan will oft interrupt good motions by good motions to hinder both. How ſhall we know from whence the motions come? When two good motions ariſe, ſeeming diverſe, the ſpirit of God carries ſtrong to one, and that is from God more than the other. Good motions are either raiſed up in us, or ſent unto us by the ſpirit; both theſe, if they be by the ſpirit, they will carry us to God: they will riſe as high as the ſpring is whence they come: what ariſeth from ourſelves, endeth in ourſelves.

Thoſe that the ſpirit ſtirs up from within, come from ſanctified judgement

judgement and eſtimation of what they are moved to; other motions are haſty before they have their errand; holy motions are conſtant, as ſtrengthened from conſtant grace within, till they ſee the iſſue of what they are moved to: other motions are like lightning, ſudden flaſhes, that leave the ſoul more dark and amazed. Holy motions are anſwerable to the duties of our calling other motions oft lead us out of the compaſs of our calling.

The ſpirit moveth in the godly, firſt by dwelling in them, and working in them gracious abilities, and then drawing forth thoſe abilities to good actions. But the ſpirit dwelleth not in others, nor produceth any ſanctified abilities in them, but only moveth them ſometimes to good actions, without changing of them.

4. The holy ſpirit's motions are ſeaſonable: other motions oft preſs upon us, to diſturb a holy duty. The breath of the ſpirit in us is ſuitable to the ſpirit's breathing in the ſcriptures: the ſame ſpirit doth not breathe contrary motions.

Again, the ſpirit moveth us ſo to duties of religion, as agree with civil honeſty, and charity to our neighbours. Thoſe therefore know not what ſpirit they are of, who, under a pretence of zeal, will be uncivil, and cruel, ſhewing they are not led by that ſpirit that appeareth in the ſhape of a dove; both tables in in this are one, that they come from one ſpirit: and the ſecond is like the firſt, and requireth love. And becauſe all graces and duties come from the ſame ſpirit, therefore one duty never croſſes another; but the wiſdom of the ſpirit moves to all holy duties in their ſeveral and ſuitable places.

5. Motions for the matter good, yet may be carnal, in regard of ſelf-confidence, from whence they come. That which Peter reſolved upon was good, but confidence in himſelf marred it; thoſe motions which the ſpirit ſtirs up, are carried along in relying upon aſſiſting grace. So much for that queſtion.

Again, if we would not grieve the ſpirit, let us take heed of being wanting to the ſpirit's direction. The fleſh here will make this froward objection, We can do no more than we can. The ſpirit is always beforehand with us, preventing us with ſome knowledge, and ſome ability, which if we join with the ſpirit in putting forth, the ſpirit is ready to concur with us, and lead us further; and our conſcience tells us ſo much, that if we do otherwiſe, it is not for want of preſent aſſiſtance, or privity, that

that the ſpirit will deny us ſtrength, if we put ourſelves upon it: but our hearts, though deceitful, yet will tell us that we do what we do out of willingneſs, preferring ſome ſeeming good before the motion of the ſpirit. Hereupon we carry in our conſcience, that which will acquit God, and condemn ourſelves. There is not the worſt man, whoſe heart runs away from God, but God follows him a great while with ſweet motions, though ſuch be the invincible ſtubbornneſs of the heart, that it will not yield: this will take away all excuſe, as St. Auſtin argues well. If I had known, (ſaith a wicked man), I would not have done thus, ſaith he; the pride of thy heart ſuggeſts that; hadſt thou not motions and admonitions that told thee of the danger of it? If the ſpirit, even in the worſt actions, concur ſo far as they are actions and motions, may we not think that he is much more ready to concur with holy motions, ſtirred up firſt by himſelf? if the ſpirit be willing to concur in natural actions, much more in ſpiritual, whereunto itſelf is the firſt mover; the ſpirit leaves not us, till we leave the ſpirit.

When the ſpirit ſuggeſts good motions, turn them preſently into holy reſolutions. Is this my duty, and that which tends to my comfort? certainly I will do it. Let not theſe motions die in us. How many holy motions are kindled in us, in hearing the word, and receiving the ſacraments, &c. which die as ſoon as they are kindled for want of reſolution; therefore let us not give over till theſe motions be turned into good purpoſes; and thoſe purpoſes ripened to holy actions, that they may not be nipped in the bloſſom, but may bring forth perfect fruit. Let us labour to improve theſe talents to the end for which they are ſent: are they motions of comfort? let us uſe them for comfort: are they motions tending to duty? let us make conſcience to do our duty. Let not our deſpairing hearts croſs the ſpirit in his comforts, nor ſtand out ſtubbornly as enemies againſt our duty, for that is to croſs God, and to nip his motions in the bud.

Let the ſpirit have full ſcope, both in the ordinances and in the motions ſtirred up by the ordinances: this is the way to make the ordinances and the times glorious; but the liberties of the goſpel are contrary to the liberties of the fleſh; it turneth all things upſide down, and men out of themſelves. Hence is it that there is nothing ſo much oppoſed by the ſpirit of the world, as the purity and power of the goſpel, which is a ſufficient token of the ill condition that all ſuch are men are in. But

there

there is another ſpirit in gracious men, they are the children of light, and love it. If we would not grieve the ſpirit, we muſt be willing to bring ourſelves under all opportunities of the ſpirit's working: as converſing with thoſe that are ſpiritual, and eſpecially attending upon thoſe ordinances wherein the ſpirit breatheth; wherein we may meet the ſpirit. The walks of God's ſpirit are in the means of ſalvation, hearing the word preached, and holy communion one with another: the word and ſpirit go together; therefore if we will have the comforts of the ſpirit, we muſt attend upon the word. Men grieve the ſpirit by neglecting the word, and holy conference, &c. It is with the word and ſpirit as with the veins and arteries; the veins have arteries, that as the veins carry the blood, the arteries carry the ſpirits to quicken the blood. The word is dead without the ſpirit, and therefore attend on the word; and then wait on the ſpirit to quicken the word; that both word and ſpirit may guide us to life everlaſting. Motions of this kind come from the ſpirit, as it is ſaid of old Simeon, that he came by the motion of the ſpirit into the Temple. John was in the ſpirit on the Lord's day; our Manna falls moſt then; Chriſt's word and ſpirit dwell together in the heart; therefore the apoſtle uſeth the dwelling of Chriſt in us, and the Word indefinitely. Faith wrought by the word, lays hold upon Chriſt, and brings him into the ſoul, and keeps him there. It is a bleſſed thing, when the ſpirit in the ordinance, and the ſpirit in our hearts meet together; this is the way to feed and cheriſh the ſpirit in us, and to put oil, as it were, into the lamp; becauſe the ſpirit as it is in us, is thus nouriſhed, even as the fire, though in its own element, feeds upon nothing, yet with us here below, it is maintained with fuel, otherwiſe it dieth and goeth out. Take head of ſlighting any help of faith that God affords us, like wicked Ahaz: God offered him, for the ſtrengthening of his faith, a ſign from heaven, or from earth, or from any other creature: oh, no, he would not tempt God: he ſeemed a pious man, he would not tempt God; but what ſaith the prophet? "Is it little for you to deſpiſe me, but you will grieve God?" inſinuating, that when we deſpiſe thoſe helps God hath given, we grieve the ſpirit of God. Thoſe who neglect the word and ſacrament, what do they deſpiſe, a poor miniſter? and neglect bread and wine? no, they deſpiſe God himſelf, who knows better than ourſelves what need we have of theſe helps.

Again, when we find the ſpirit not aſſiſting and comforting,

as in former times, it is fit to ſearch the cauſe; which we ſhall find to be ſome ſlighting of holy motions, or the means of breeding of them, or yielding to ſome corruption which we are more eſpecially addicted unto, or ſome ſin unrepented of, which we take no notice of: it is good therefore to ſearch our ſouls to the bottom: there may be ſome hidden corruption lying in the ſoul, which may undermine all grace and comfort: there may be a privy thief that robs us of all; and beſides beloved and ſecret ſins, it is good to bethink ourſelves of old ſins, which perhaps hitherto we have but careleſsly thought of; and God is willing, by ſome deadneſs, and trouble of ſpirit, to mind us of renewing of ſorrow for them: for want of ſtrict accounting with ourſelves, God calls us to theſe arrears and back reckonings, as we ſee in Joſeph's brethren. If we find not that ſweetneſs of communion with the ſpirit, that we formerly enjoyed, bethink ourſelves when and where we loſt it, that we may meet the ſpirit again in theſe ways wherein we found him before we loſt him, and take heed of theſe courſes, in the entrance of which we found the ſpirit leaving us.

Again, take heed of little ſins, which we count leſſer ſins perhaps than God doth; we weigh in our own balance, and not in his; whereas no ſin is to be accounted little; for, if it were once ſet upon the conſcience, and the wrath opened due unto it, it would take all comfort from us: and therefore we muſt judge of ſin, as the ſpirit doth, if we would not grieve the ſpirit; as the communion of the ſpirit is of all the ſweeteſt, ſo the preſerving of it, requires moſt exact watchfulneſs, and thorough underſtanding of ourſelves. Take heed of the beginning of ſin; when any luſt ariſeth, pray it down preſently; ſay nay to it, let it have no conſent; be preſently humbled, otherwiſe we are endangered by yielding to grieve, by grieving to reſiſt, by reſiſting to quench, by quenching, maliciouſly to oppoſe the ſpirit. Sin hath no bounds but thoſe which the ſpirit puts, whom therefore we ſhould not grieve. And let us look to the head and ſpring of ſins, whereby we grieve the ſpirit of God, not to the ſin ſo much as to the root. We are angry with ourſelves for for being paſſionate; but what is the cauſe of that paſſion? it comes from pride. Jonah was a paſſionate man; in that meaſure he was paſſionate he was proud; he was loth to be ſhamed when he had ſaid, "Nineveh ſhall be deſtroyed;" he thought upon the ſparing of them, he ſhould be diſcredited; and he preferred his credit before the deſtruction of a populous city. So

there

there is much depraving, and detraction in the world, and thereupon brawls and breaches. What is the cauſe? a ſpirit of envy, and oftentimes a ſpirit of pride. So men run into the danger of others, by wronging them. What is the cauſe? worldlineſs, baſe earthly mindedneſs. Men think not of the root of ſin, but dwell upon the act done: we ſhould be led from the remote ſtreams to the ſpring and ſource of all, and bewail that eſpecially.

This care will be helped by ſpiritual wiſdom, whereby we may diſcern both wherein we have grieved the ſpirit; and wherein, for the time to come, we may. We cannot maintain friendſhip in perfect terms with any whoſe diſpoſition we know not, nor can know what will pleaſe or diſpleaſe them; therefore we ſhould ſtudy the nature and delight of the ſpirit, and wherein we are prone both to forget ourſelves and the ſpirit. We much eſteem not the friendſhip of thoſe who are ſo much friends to themſelves, as they care not much whether friends be contented or diſcontented. The ſpirit dwells moſt largely in that heart that hath emptied itſelf of itſelf: the Iſraelites felt not the ſweetneſs of manna, till they had ſpent their fleſh pots and other proviſion of Egypt. The nature of God's ſpirit is holy; as it is holy, ſo it delighteth in holy temples. Thoſe therefore that ſet up any idol of jealouſy in their ſouls againſt God, that do not preſerve their veſſels in holineſs, cannot think of any communion with the ſpirit: the ſpirit is jealous of our affection, and will have nothing ſet up in the heart above God; though the ſpirit ſtoops to dwell in us, yet muſt not forget the reſpect due to ſo great a ſuperior, but reverently entertain whatever comes from him. Reverence and obedience is the carriage due to a ſuperior, and where this diſtance is not kept, will follow a breach. We ſhould reverence ourſelves for the ſpirit's ſake, and think ourſelves too good for any baſe luſt to lodge in that heart that the ſpirit hath taken for itſelf; ſhould turn off all contrary motions with abomination. What ſhould pride, and envy, and paſſion do in a heart conſecrated to the ſpirit of meekneſs and holineſs?

Upon any breach, we muſt firſt look, by renewing repentance, and faith in Chriſt, to renew our peace with God, before we can expect the grace and comfort of the ſpirit. For as the ſpirit cometh from the Father and the Son, and is procured by the death and ſatisfaction of the Son to the Father, without which

we could never have expected the gift of the ſpirit: ſo ſtill we muſt have an eye to this ſatisfaction by Chriſt, and reconciliation through it, before we can recover communion with the ſpirit, as being the beſt fruit of the love of God reconciled through Chriſt. We ſee David, in the 51ſt pſalm, firſt importunes God for mercy again and again, and then for the ſpirit, and for the joy of ſalvation.

And take heed that nothing come in, nor go out of our ſouls that may grieve the ſpirit of God. Some things come in to us that grieve the ſpirit; the corruptions we receive from others: ſome things come out of our hearts that grieve God's ſpirit, as corrupt thoughts and ſpeeches, that indeed is the ſcope of this place; "Let no corrupt communication come out of your mouths," &c. and then follows, "And grieve not the holy ſpirit of God." And after again he ſaith, "Let all bitterneſs, and wrath, and clamour be laid aſide;" inſinuating that one way of grieving the ſpirit, is by ill and corrupt language. We can never talk with company that is not ſpiritual, but they will either vex and grieve us, or taint, and defile us; unleſs it be in ſuch exigencies of our calling as require our converſe with them. But I ſpeak of a voluntary choice of ſuch as favour not good things. Many men, to pleaſe their own carnal ſpirits, and the carnal ſpirits of others, they vent that which is againſt conſcience, and againſt that which is higher than conſcience, a more divine principle, the holy ſpirit of God: looſe carnal ſpeakers are people void of the power of religion.

The holy ſpirit of God is our guide: who will diſpleaſe his guide? A ſweet comfortable guide that leads us through the wilderneſs of this world; as the cloud before the Iſraelites by day, and the pillar of fire by night: ſo he conducts us to the heavenly Canaan; if we grieve our guide, we cauſe him to leave us to ourſelves. The Iſraelites would not go a ſtep further than God by his angel went before them. It is in vain for us to make toward heaven without our bleſſed guide; we cannot do, nor ſpeak, nor think, any thing that is holy and good, without him; whatſoever is holy and pious, it grows not in our garden, in our nature, but it is planted by the ſpirit.

Object.—Let no man ſay, Here is ado indeed, duty upon duty, this will make our life troubleſome.

Anſ.—The life of a chriſtian is an honorable, a comfortable, ſweet

ſweet life: indeed it requires the moſt care and watchfulneſs of any life in the world, being the beſt life that is begun here, and accompliſhed in everlaſting life in heaven. Nothing in this world, neither our eſtates, nor our favour with great perſons, can be preſerved without watchfulneſs; and ſhall we think to preſerve the chief happineſs of our ſouls without it, having ſo many enemies without and within, that labour to draw us into a curſed condition?

Therefore to ſtir us up to the practice of theſe duties, that we may give contentment to ſo ſweet a gueſt, conſider what reaſon we have to regard the ſpirit and his motions, from the good we have by them. There is not in the world ſo great and ſweet a friend, that will do us ſo much good as the ſpirit, if we give him entertainment. Indeed he muſt rule, he will have the keys delivered to him, we muſt ſubmit to his government. And when he is in the heart, he will ſubdue, by little and little, all high thoughts, rebellious riſings, and deſpairing fears. Indeed that ſhall be our happineſs in heaven, when we ſhall be wholly ſpiritual, when "God ſhall be all in all;" when we ſhall be perfectly obedient to the ſpirit in our underſtandings, wills, and affections. Now we are partly fleſh, and partly ſpirit, God is not all in all, the fleſh hath a part in us, and we are ſhackled with corruptions. But that ſhall be our happineſs then, to have the ſpirit dwell largely in us, when he ſhall make the room where he dwelleth ſweet, and lightſome, and free, and ſubduing whatſoever is contrary; ſhall bring fulneſs of peace, and joy, and comfort. In the mean time, in what condition ſoever we are, we have ſuitable help from the ſpirit. Are we in darkneſs? he is a ſpirit of light: Are we in deadneſs of ſpirit? he is a ſpirit, he is a ſpirit of life: Are we in a diſconſolate eſtate? he is a ſpirit of conſolation: Are we in perplexity, and know not what to do? he is a ſpirit of wiſdom: Are we troubled with corruptions? He is a ſanctifying, a ſubduing, a mortifying ſpirit. In what condition ſoever we are in, he will never leave us, till he hath raiſed us from the grave, and taken full poſſeſſion of body and ſoul in heaven. He will prove a comforter, when neither friends, nor riches, nor any thing in the world can comfort us. How careful ſhould we be to give contentment to this ſweet ſpirit of God?

No chriſtian is ſo happy as the watchful chriſtian that is careful of his duty, and to preſerve his communion with the holy

ſpirit of God; for by entertaining him, he is ſure to have communion with the Father and the Son. It is the happieſt condition in the world, when the ſoul is the temple of the holy ſpirit; when the heart is the holy of holies, where there are prayers and praiſes offered to God. The ſoul is as it were an holy ark, the memory like the pot of manna preſerving heavenly truths. It is an heavenly condition; a man proſpers to heavenward, when the ſpirit of God is with him. You know Obed-Edom, when the ark was in his houſe, all thrived with him; ſo while the ſpirit and his motions are entertained by us, we ſhall be happy in life, happy in death, happy to eternity. For it is he,

By which you are ſealed to the day of redemption.

The apoſtle ſealeth this grave admonition by an argument taken from the ſpirit's ſealing of them to the day of redemption.

We are all by nature in bondage to ſin and corruption. We all are redeemed from ſin by the firſt coming of Chriſt, and are to be redeemed from corruption by the ſecond.

There is a day appointed for this glorious work. In the mean time God would have us aſſured of it aforehand.

This aſſurance is by ſealing. And this ſealing is by the ſpirit; none elſe need do it, no meaner perſon can do it.

And what reſpect is due to the ſpirit, for doing ſo gracious a work, that we grieve him not? and not only ſo, but that we endeavour ſo to pleaſe him, as he may with delight go on with this bleſſed work, that it hath pleaſed him to take upon him.

As the duty is ſpiritual, ſo the arguments that enforce it are ſpiritual; and the arguments here are fetched from that which hath a moſt conſtraining force; love expreſſed in the ſweeteſt fruit of it, and the ſtability of it, ſealing, and ſealing to the day of redemption; as if the apoſtle ſhould reaſon thus: God the Father hath ordained you to ſalvation by the redemption of Chriſt his Son; and that you might have the comfort of it in the way to it, againſt all diſcouragements you may meet with; the Holy Ghoſt hath aſſured you of it, and ſet his ſeal upon you, as thoſe that are ſet apart for ſo great ſalvation; that the ſenſe of this love might breed love in you again, and love breed a care, out of ingenuouſneſs not to offend ſo gracious a ſpirit.

The

The Holy Spirit by which you are ſealed.

The Holy Ghoſt delighteth to ſpeak in our own language; we cannot riſe to him, therefore he ſtoopeth to us.

This ſealing is either ſealing of perſons, or of good things intended to the perſons. Sealing is not only a witneſſing to us, but a work upon us, and in us, carrying the image of him that ſealeth us, whereby we are not only aſſured of the good promiſed to us, but fitted for the receiving of it. God preparesh no good for any, but whom he prepares and fits for that good. There is not only an outward authoriſing of the great grants we have by promiſe, oath, and Sacrament, but an inward, by the ſpirit perſuading us of our intereſt in them, and working that which doth authoriſe us to lay claim unto them after the uſe of a ſeal, both in confirmation and repreſentation, and reſemblance of him that ſealed.

The perſons ſealed are firſt Chriſt, and then thoſe that are given to Chriſt.—Chriſt is ſealed,

1. By the Father; Chriſt was ordained by him to be a Saviour in our nature, predeſtinate to be the head of the church. Wherefore he often ſaith, he came to do his Father's will.—"Him hath the Father ſealed," John vi. 27. anointing him, calling him, ſetting him forth, ſanctifying him by the ſpirit, and every way fitting him with all grace to be a Saviour.

2. He was ſealed, by the fulneſs of the Godhead dwelling in fleſh, abaſed, and exalted for us, ſo as his fleſh is the fleſh of the Son of God, and his blood the blood of God.

3. Sealed by a teſtimony from heaven of all three perſons: by the Father—"This is my well-beloved Son;" by the Holy Spirit deſcending like a dove: by himſelf, to his human nature dwelling in all fullneſs in it. Chriſt is ſealed by miracles done upon him, and by him, by his baptizing and inſtalling into his office, and giving himſelf to ſhed his blood for ſin, by which blood the covenant is eſtabliſhed and ſealed.

In being juſtified in the ſpirit, being raiſed from the dead, and "declared thereby to be the Son of God mightily with power," and then advanced to the right hand of God, that through him our faith and truſt might be in God, 1. Pet. i. 14. and appearing there for ever for us, ſheweth not only his ability and willingneſs to ſave us, but that it is done already. We

may see all, whatever we can look for to ourselves, performed in our head, and to our comfort.

2. As Christ was sealed and fitted for us, so we are sealed and fitted for Christ. There is a privy seal in predestination, this is known only to God himself: "The Lord knoweth who are his." And this knowledge of God of us is carried secret, as a river under ground, untill his calling of us from the rest of mankind. When first by his spirit he convinceth us of what we are in ourselves, and in what a cursed condition; and thereby layeth us low by sorrow and humiliation for sin, as the greatest evil; and then a pardon is more to us than a crown; then to wait for mercy, and continue so, and beg for mercy; and that upon Christ's own condition, by denying and renouncing any thing of our own, then Christ is Christ unto us. Indeed, after this it pleaseth Christ by his Spirit to open a door of hope, and give some hints of mercy, and to let in some beams of love; and withal, to raise up the soul by a spirit of faith, to close with particular mercy opened and offered by the spirit, whereby the soul sealeth to the truth of the promise, John iii. "He that believeth hath set to his seal that God is true." It is strange, that God should stoop so low as to receive, (as it were) confirmation by our belief: but thus God condescends in the phrase of Scripture, as we are said to help God, curse ye Meroz, because they came not to help the Lord, &c. God stoops to be helped by us, and to have his truth, and power, and goodness ratified, and confirmed by us, when we believe the promise of God in Christ, (though it be by the help of the spirit), we seal God's truth. And then God honoureth that sealing of ours, by the sealing of his spirit; "After you believed, you were sealed," saith the apostle; that is, the gracious love of Christ was further confirmed to them. God honours no grace so much as faith; Why? because it honours God most of all others; it gives God the honour of his mercy, and goodness, and wisdom, and power, and of his truth; especially he that believes in God, by believing seals that God is true, and God honours that soul again by sealing it to the day of redemption: God hath promised, "Those that honour me I will honour." Therefore, "He that believeth hath the witness in himself," that grace promised belongeth to him, for he carries in his heart the counterpart of the promises, he that confesseth and believeth shall have mercy. I believe, saith the soul, therefore the promise belongs to me; my faith answering God's love in the promise, witnesseth so much

much to me. The ſpirit not only revealeth Chriſt, and the promiſes in general, but in attending upon the ordinances, by an heavenly light, the ſpirit diſcovers to us our intereſt in particular, and faith to the ſoul, God is thy ſalvation; and enableth the ſoul to ſay, I am God's: I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. Chriſt loved me, and gave himſelf for me. Whence came this voice of St Paul? It was the ſtill voice of the ſpirit of God; that, together with the general truth in the goſpel, diſcovered in particular Chriſt's love to him. It is not a general faith that will bring to heaven, but there is a ſpecial work of the ſpirit (in the uſe of means), diſcovering and ſealing the goodwill of God to us, that he intends good unto us; and thereupon our hearts are perſuaded to believe in God, and love God as our God, and Chriſt as our Chriſt.

This is excellently ſet down in the ſweet communion of marriage, the ſpirit is the paranimphos, the procurer of the marriage between Chriſt and the ſoul. Now it is not ſufficient to know that God and Chriſt bear good will to all believers (though that be the ground and general foundation of all, and a great preparative to the ſpecial ſealing of the ſpirit), but then the ſpirit comes, and faith, Chriſt hath a ſpecial good will to me, and ſtirs up in me a liking to him again, to take him upon his own conditions, with conflict of corruption, with the ſcorns of the world, &c. Whereupon the mutual marriage is made up between Chriſt and us: this work is the ſealing of the ſpirit.

Many are the privileges of a chriſtian from this his ſealing, as the uſe of a ſeal in man's affairs is manifold.

1. Seals ſerve for confirmation and allowance; to that purpoſe meaſures are ſealed: "God is ſaid to ſeal inſtruction," Job xxxiii. 16. Confirmation is either by giving ſtrength, or by the authority of ſuch as are able to make good what they promiſe; and are alſo willing, which they ſhew by putting to their ſeal, which hath as much ſtrength to confirm him to whom the promiſe is made, as he hath will and power to make it good that hath engaged himſelf Amongſt men, there is the writing, and the ſeal to the writing; when the ſeal is added to the writing, there is a perfect ratification: ſo there are abundance of gracious promiſes in the ſcriptures; now when the ſpirit comes and ſeals them to the ſoul, then they are ſure to us; the ſpirit puts the ſeal to the promiſes.

1. The

2. The uſe of it likewiſe is for diſtinction from others that carry not that mark. So the ſealing of the ſpirit diſtinguiſheth a chriſtian from all other men. There is a diſtinction between men, in God's eternal purpoſes, but that concerns not us to meddle with, farther than to know it in general. God knoweth who are his, and who are not his; but in time the holy ſpirit diſtinguiſheth, and ranks men, as they were diſtinguiſhed before all worlds, and as they ſhall be at the day of judgment; the beginning of that diſtinction that ſhall be afterward is in this life. A ſeal maketh the impreſſion of an image; the prince's image uſeth to be on his ſeal: ſo is God's image in his, which deſtroyeth the old image and print that was in us before. Holy and good men by this work of the ſpirit are diſtinguiſhed,

1. From civil men, by the work of holineſs, which mere civil moral men have not at all, but deſpiſe.

And ſecondly, from ſeeming good men; by the depth of that work, the ſpirit of God works a new nature in them, whereby they are diſtinguiſhed. Now, nature in every creature is carried to one thing more than to another; ſo there is a diſtinct propenſity in a good man, to God, to grace, and goodneſs; his aims and bents are diſtinct; and thereupon he hath a greater enlargement of heart ſuitable to his great aims; he looks above the world, and worldly men; they are narrow, low, baſe ſpirited men, the beſt of them.

Again, things by nature work from within: herein painted hypocrites are diſtinguiſhed from a true ſubſtantial chriſtian; he works from a principle within; another man is moved as the automata, things of motion, clocks and the like, engines of wit, that move from a weight without that poiſeth them. If they do any good, it is from ſomewhat without that ſwayeth their aims and ends, and not from an inward principle. Nature works from an inward principle; light things go upward, and heavy things downward naturally; artificial things are forced. Thus good men are diſtinguiſhed from thoſe that are ſeemingly; there is a new nature wrought in them.

Again, nature is conſtant; what is done naturally is done conſtantly; heavy bodies go always downward, and light bodies fly upward: every creature works according to its nature. A holy man is exerciſed in holineſs conſtantly, becauſe he doth it from an inward principle, from a work and ſtamp within. Different

ferent things may ſeem the ſame; as wild herbs may have the form and colour of thoſe that are planted in the garden; but there is a difference in the virtue of them: the ſeeming grace and actions of an hypocrite, they leave no virtue in them; as there are ſome drugs without virtue, dead things. But there is a diſtinguiſhing virtue in the faith of a chriſtian, whereby he overcomes the world and his luſts, whereby he doth all duties, prays, and hears, and is fruitful in his converſation; in all his graces there is a comforting ſtrengthening virtue. True gold hath the virtue to comfort and ſtrengthen the heart, that alchymy gold hath not. True grace hath a working comforting virtue. Another man's formal artificial actions have no virtue in them, neither is it intended, they being only put on to ſerve a turn. Two men may do the ſame things, and yet there be a grand difference; the one doing them from the ſeal of the ſpirit, from a deeper dye and ſtamp of the ſpirit; the other, if from the ſpirit, yet it is but from a common work at the beſt. Some dyes cannot bear the weather, but alter colour preſently; but there are others that, having ſomething that gives a deeper tincture, will hold. The graces of a true chriſtian hold out all kinds of weather, in winter and ſummer, proſperity and adverſity, when ſuperficial counterfeit holineſs will give over; thus we ſee the ſeal of the ſpirit ſerves for diſtinction.

3. The uſe of a ſeal is likewiſe for appropriation. Merchants uſe to ſeal their wares they would not have others have any right unto.

A chriſtian is God's in a more peculiar manner than others; there is not only a witneſs of the ſpirit that God is his, but the ſpirit works in him an aſſent to take God again. There is a mutual approbation, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine," ſaith Auſtin, well when the ſoul can ſay, Thou art my God. It is not fruſtrate, becauſe God ſaith before, I am thy ſalvation: where the ſpirit ſeals, God appropriates—"God chooſeth the righteous man to himſelf." And we may know this appropriation by appropriating God again, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and what have I in earth in compariſon of thee?" There is no action that God works upon the ſoul, but there is a reflex action by the ſpirit to God again. If God chuſe and love us, we chuſe and love him again. God appropriates us, we are his, and we are Chriſt's; we are God's becauſe he hath given Chriſt for us; we are Chriſt's, becauſe he hath given himſelf for us;

we

we are, as the apoſtle ſaith, a people of acquiſition, " a people purchaſed," purchaſed at a dear rate by the blood of Chriſt; thoſe that are Chriſt's, the ſpirit appropriates them; this appropriation iſſues from a former purchaſe.

4. Again, we uſe to ſet our ſeal only upon what we have ſome eſtimation of; " Set me as a ſeal," ſaith the Church in the Canticles, " upon thy right hand;" have me in thy eye and mind, as a ſpecial thing thou valueſt.

The witneſs and work of the ſpirit, ſhews God's eſtimation of us: the ſcripture is abundant in ſetting forth the great price that God ſets on his children; they are his children, his ſpouſe, his friends, his portion, his treaſure, his coin, he ſets his mark, his likeneſs on them; they are things hallowed and conſecrated, they are firſt fruits. " Iſrael is a holy thing;" their titles ſhew the eſteem that God hath of them; he values them more than all the world beſides, which are as chaff and droſs. " The " righteous man is more excellent than his neighbour." As there is a difference of excellency between precious, and other common ſtones, between fruitful and barren trees; ſo there is amongſt men; and, in this regard, God ſets a higher eſteem upon ſome; and thence it is that they have thoſe honourable and glorious titles in ſcripture, of ſons, heirs, kings, and co-heirs with Chriſt, when others are termed droſs and dung, and thorns, and have all the baſe terms that may be.

Now this eſtimation, by ſealing, is known to us by the grace God works in us: common gifts and privileges, and favours of the world, are no ſeal of God's eſtimation. If God ſhould give a man kingdoms, and great monarchies, it ſeals not God's love to him at all; but when God makes a man a ſpiritual king, to rule over his baſe luſts, this is a ſeal of God's valuing him above other men. Therefore we ſhould learn how to value others, and ourſelves; not by common things that caſt-aways may have, but by the ſtamp of God ſet on us by the ſpirit, which is an argument that God intends to lay us up as coin for another treaſury, for heaven. It is the common grand error of the times, to be led with falſe evidences. Many think God loves them, becauſe he ſpares them, and follows them with long patience, and makes them thrive in the world. Alas, are theſe fruits of God's ſpecial love? What grace hath he wrought in thy heart by his ſpirit? " he gives his ſpirit to them that pray;" inſinuating, that next to the gift of his Son, the greateſt gift is the

the ſpirit, to faſhion and fit us to be members of his ſon: this is an argument of God's love and eſteem.

5. Seals likewiſe are uſed for ſecreſy, as in letters, &c.; ſo this ſeal of the ſpirit is a ſecret work; God knoweth who are his, they are only known to him, and to their own hearts; "The white ſtone is only known to him that hath it," and the hidden manna—none can ſo infallibly know the ſtate in grace, as thoſe that have the gracious work themſelves. Holy men in ſome degree are known one to another, to make the communion of ſaints the ſweeter. There is a great deal of ſpiritual likeneſs in chriſtians, face anſwereth to face; that one hath ſtrong confidence of the ſalvation of another; but the undoubted certainty of a man's eſtate is known only to God and his own ſoul; nay, ſometimes it is hidden from a man's ſelf; there are ſo many infirmities and abaſements and troubles in the world, that this life is called an hidden life in ſcripture; "our life is hidden with Chriſt in God;" it is unknown to the ſaints themſelves ſometimes, and to the world always; they neither know him that begets, nor them that are begotten.

Hence, likewiſe, the uſe of a ſeal is to ſhow that things ſhould be kept inviolable: hereupon the church is a ſealed fountain.—Sealing ſhows a care of preſervation from common annoyance: hereupon likewiſe it is, that the ſealing is the ſecuring of perſons or things ſealed from hurt. No man will violate a letter, becauſe it is ſealed. The tomb where Chriſt was buried was ſealed, and the priſon doors upon Daniel, that none might meddle with them; ſo the ſpirit of God, by this work of ſealing, ſecures God's children; as the blood ſprinkled on the doors of the Iſraelites, ſecured them from the deſtroying angel. In Ezek. ix. there was a mark ſet upon thoſe that were to be preſerved, that ſecured them; and in Rev. vii. the ſealed ones muſt not be hurt. So where this ſeal of the ſpirit is, it is an argument that God means to preſerve ſuch a one from eternal deſtruction, and from prevailing dangers in this world. They are God's ſealed ones, no one can hurt them without wrong to God himſelf; "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm:" And likewiſe from devouring ſins, and dangerous apoſtacy: a man that is truly ſealed by the ſpirit of God, he never becomes a member of antichriſt, a ſtigmatized papiſt (for antichriſt hath his ſeal too), he is kept from ſoul-murdering errors; he hath his ſecurity upon him by the work and witneſs of God's ſpirit. Whatſoever

ſoever the uſe is, or can be of a ſeal in man's affairs, that God will have us make uſe of, in his heavenly intercourſe betwixt him and us.

Whereby you are ſealed.

Now there are divers degrees of the ſpirit's ſealing.

1. Faith: "He that believeth hath the witneſs in himſelf," 1 John, v. 10. he carries in his heart the counterpart of all the promiſes. This grace is firſt planted in the heart, and anſwereth to God's love and purpoſe towards us of giving eternal life: the ſeal and firſt diſcovery of election is manifeſted to us in our believing, Acts xiii. 48. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." This believing is alſo a ſeal to us, in that it is of thoſe gifts that accompany ſalvation, of which God never repents by calling back again, it is "a ſeed that abideth for ever."

2. The work of ſanctifying grace upon the heart, is a ſeal—whom the ſpirit ſanctifieth, he ſaveth. "The Lord knoweth who are his:" but how ſhall we know it? By this ſeal, "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord, depart from iniquity;" not only in heart and affection, but in converſation; and that ſhall be a ſeal of his Sonſhip to him: none are children of God by adoption, but thoſe that are children alſo by regeneration: none are heirs of heaven, but they are new-born to it. Bleſſed be God, the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath begotten us anew to an inheritance immortal, &c. This ſeal of ſanctification leaves upon the ſoul the likeneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, even grace for grace.

But becauſe in time of deſertion and temptation we are in a miſt, and cannot read our own faith, and our own graces, it pleaſeth Chriſt, after ſome trial and exerciſe, to ſhine upon his own graces in the heart, whereby we may know we believe, and know we love: until which time the heart ſees nothing that is good, and ſeems to be nothing that is good, and ſeems to be nothing but all objections and doubtings. We may be ſometimes in ſuch a ſtate as Paul and his company were in the ſhip, Acts xxvii. when they ſaw neither ſun nor ſtars for many days together, almoſt paſt all hope. So a chriſtian may for many days together, ſee neither ſun nor ſtar, neither light in God's countenance, nor light in his own heart, no grace iſſuing from God, no grace carrying the ſoul to God, though even at that time God

God darts ſome beam through thoſe clouds upon the ſoul; the ſoul again, by a ſpirit of faith, ſees ſome light through thoſe thickeſt clouds, enough to keep the ſaul from utter deſpair, tho' not to ſettle it in peace.

In this dark condition, if they do as St Paul and his company did, caſt anchor even in the dark night of temptation, and pray ſtill for day, God ſhall appear, and all ſhall clear up; we ſhall ſee light without, and light within; the day-ſtar will ariſe in our hearts.

Though by reflecting upon our ſouls we are able to diſcern a ſpirit of faith, God may hide himſelf from the ſoul in regard of comfort. Nay, a chriſtian may know himſelf to be in the ſtate of grace, and yet be in an afflicted condition. As in Job's caſe, he knew his redeemer lived, and he reſolved to truſt in him, even though he killed him; he knew he was no hypocrite, he knew his graces were true; and, for all the imputations of his friends, they could not diſpute him out of his ſincerity; you ſhall not take my righteouſneſs from me. Yet for the preſent he ſaw no light from heaven, till it pleaſed God to reveal himſelf in ſpecial favour to him. There is always peace and joy in believing, yet not in that which gives the ſoul content, until by honouring God, in believing and waiting ſtill his good time, he honoureth us with farther ſenſe of his favour, and poureth forth his ſpirit to us, manifeſting his ſpecial love towards us. And this is a further degree of ſealing us, confirming us more ſtrongly than before.

The reaſon why we can neither have grace to believe, nor know we believe, nor when we know we believe, or enjoy comfort, without a freſh new act of the ſpirit, is becauſe the whole carriage of a ſoul to heaven is above nature. Where the ſpirit makes a ſtand, we ſtand and can go no further; we cannot conclude from right grounds without ſome help of the ſpirit; ſome doubts, ſome fears, will hinder the application to ourſelves; even as thoſe that live in ſome damnable ſin cannot but grant that thoſe which live in ſuch a ſin ſhall never inherit heaven: and their conſcience tells them they live in ſuch a ſin, yet ſelf-love blinds them ſo, that they will not conclude againſt themſelves that they ſhall be damned; ſo true believers cannot conclude for themſelves without divine light and help.

It pleaſeth God thus to keep every degree and act of ſealing

at

in his own hand, to keep us in perpetual dependence upon him, and to awe us that we ſhould not grieve the ſpirit of grace, and cauſe him to ſuſpend either acts of grace or comfort.

Joy and ſtrong comfort come from a ſuperadded ſeal of the ſpirit. The works of the ſpirit are of a double kind; either in us, by imprinting ſanctifying grace; or upon us, by ſhining upon our ſouls in ſweet feelings of joy. What the ſpirit worketh in us is more conſtant, as a new nature, which is always like itſelf, and worketh uniformly; but comfort and joy are of the nature of ſuch priviliges as God vouchſafeth at one time, and not another, to ſome and not to others.

This degree of ſealing in regard of joy hath its degrees likewiſe. Sometimes it is ſo clear and ſtrong, that the ſoul queſtioneth not its ſtate in grace ever after, but paſſeth on in a triumphant manner to that glory it looks for. Sometimes after this ſealing, there may be interrupting of comfortable communion, ſo far as to queſtion our condition; yet this calling into queſtion comes not from the ſpirit, which, where it once witneſſeth for us, never witneſſeth againſt us, but it is a fruit of the fleſh not fully ſubdued, it is a ſin of itſelf, and uſually a fruit of ſome former ſin. For howſoever we ſhould not doubt after a former witneſs of the ſpirit, yet, there will be ſo much weakening the ſenſe of our aſſurance, as there is yielding to any luſt. The knowledge of our eſtate in grace, and comfort thereupon, tho' it may be weakened by neglect of our watchfulneſs, yet ſtill it hath the force of an argument to aſſure us, when the ſpirit pleaſeth to direct us to make uſe of it, becauſe God's love varies not as our feeling doth, and a fit doth not alter a ſtate. The child in the womb ſtirs not always, yet it lives, and that may be gathered from the former ſtirrings.

This degree of ſealing, by way of witneſs and comfort, is appropriated to the holy ſpirit. Every perſon in the bleſſed Trinity hath their different work; the Father chuſeth us, and paſſeth a decree upon the whole ground-work of our ſalvation; the Son executeth it to the full; the ſpirit applieth it, and witneſſeth our intereſt in it, by leading our ſouls to lay hold upon him, and by raiſing up our ſouls in the aſſurance of it, and by breeding and cheriſhing ſweet communion with Father and Son, who both of them ſeal us likewiſe by the ſpirit. This joy and comfort is ſo appropriated to the ſpirit, as it carrieth the very name of the ſpirit, and is one of the three witneſſes on earth, that witneſſeth

neſſeth not only Chriſt to be a Saviour, but our Saviour. The three witneſſes on earth are the ſpirit, water, and blood: for the better conceiving of which place, we muſt know, that the great work of Chriſt, of redemption, and juſtification, was typified in the Old Teſtament by blood; and the great work of our ſanctification typified by their waſhing. To anſwer which types, when Chriſt's ſide was pierced, there came forth blood and water, ſhewing that Chriſt came not only by blood to juſtify us, but by water to ſanctify us. Hereupon blood and water have the power to be witneſſes. The blood of Chriſt being ſprinkled on the heart by the ſpirit, doth pacify the conſcience in aſſuring it that God is pacified by blood, as being offered by the eternal ſpirit. This quieting power ſheweth that it was the blood of God, and ſhed for me in particular.

The witneſs of water is from the power the ſpirit hath to cleanſe our nature, which no creature can do but the ſpirit of God. Change of nature is peculiar to the author of nature. If we feel therefore our natures altered, and from unclean become holy, in ſome meaſure we may know we are the children of God, as being begotten by the ſpirit of Chriſt, conforming us to his own holineſs. Our ſpirit, as ſanctified, can witneſs to us that we are Chriſt's.

But often it falls out, that our own ſpirits, though ſanctified, cannot ſtand againſt a ſubtle temptation ſtrongly enforced; God ſuperadds his own ſpirit. Guilt often prevails over the teſtimony of blood; that of water, by reaſon of corruptions, runneth troubled. Therefore the third, the immediate teſtimony of the ſpirit, is neceſſary to witneſs the Father's love to us—to us in particular, ſaying, "I am thy ſalvation, thy ſins are pardoned." And this teſtimony the word echoeth unto, and the heart is ſtirred up, and comforted with joy inexpreſſible. So that both our ſpirits and conſciences, and the ſpirit of Chriſt joining in one ſtrongly, witneſs our condition in grace, that we are the ſons of God.

In this threefold teſtimony the order is this: blood begets water; ſatisfaction by blood procures the ſpirit from God, as a witneſs of God's love; and by feeling the power of blood and water, we come to have the ſpirit witneſſing, and ſealing our adoption unto us, to eſtabliſh us in the ſtate of grace, againſt ſtorms of temptation to the contrary. The ſpirit perſuadeth to look unto blood, convinceth the heart of the efficacy of it, and

then quieteth the ſoul, which giveth itſelf up to Chriſt wholly, and to whole Chriſt: and thence feels his heart eſtabliſhed againſt carnal reaſon, ſo as he can, and doth oppoſe Chriſt's blood to all the guilt that doth ariſe. And this witneſs of the ſpirit, comforting the ſoul, is the moſt familiar, and affects moſt.

If we feel it not, (as oft we do not) then riſe upward from want of this joy of ſpirit, to water, and ſee what work we find of the ſpirit in cleanſing our ſouls; and if we find theſe waters not to run ſo clearly as to diſcern our condition in them, then go to the witneſs of blood, and let us bathe our ſouls in it; and then we ſhall find peace in free grace procured by blood: for oft times a Chriſtian is driven to that paſs, that nothing can comfort him within, or without him, in heaven or earth, but the free and infinite mercy of God in the blood of Chriſt, whereon the ſoul relieth, when it feels no comfort, nor joy, of the ſpirit, nor ſees no work of ſanctification, then it muſt reſt on the ſatisfaction wrought by the blood of Chriſt; when the ſoul can go to God, and ſay, If we confeſs our ſins, thou art juſt to forgive them, and the blood of Chriſt ſhall cleanſe us from all ſin. Therefore, though I feel not inward peace, nor the work of the ſpirit, yet I will caſt myſelf upon thy mercy in Chriſt. Hereupon we ſhall, in God's time, come to have the witneſs of water and the ſpirit more evidently made clear unto us.

The ſpirit it is that witneſſes with blood, and witneſſes with water, and by water whatſoever is of Chriſt's is applied unto us, by the ſpirit; but beſides witneſſing with theſe witneſſes, the ſpirit hath a diſtinct witneſs by way of enlarging the ſoul; which joy, is the apprehenſion of God's fatherly love, and Chriſt's ſetting the ſoul at liberty. The ſpirit doth not always witneſs unto us our condition by force of argument from ſanctification, but ſometimes immediately by way of preſence, as the ſight of a friend comforts without help of diſcourſe: the very joy from ſight prevents the uſe of diſcourſe.

This teſtimony of the ſpirit containeth in it the force of all; word, promiſe, oath, ſeal, &c. this is greater than the promiſe, as a ſeal is more than our hand, and as an oath is more than a man's bare word. The ſame that is ſaid of God's oath in compariſon with his bare promiſe, may be ſaid of this ſealing, in compariſon of other teſtimonies. That as God was willing more abundantly to clear to the heirs of promiſe their ſalvation, he added an oath, Heb. vi. 11. So for the ſame end he added this

this his ſpirit as a ſeal to the promiſe, and to the other teſtimonies. Our own graces indeed, if we were watchful enough, would ſatisfy us. The fountain is open as to Hagar, but ſhe ſeeth it not, howſoever the ſpirit, if that cometh, it ſubdueth all doubts.

As God in his oath and ſwearing, joineth none to himſelf, but ſweareth by himſelf; ſo in this witneſs he taketh in no other teſtimony to confirm it, but witneſſeth by himſelf. And hence ariſeth joy unſpeakable, and peace which paſſeth all underſtanding; for it is an earneſt of heaven when we ſee our being in the ſtate of grace, not in the effect only, but as in the breaſt and boſom of God.

Queſt.—But how ſhall we know this witneſs from an enthuſiaſtical fancy and illuſion?

Anſ.—This witneſs of the ſpirit is known from the ſtrong conviction it bringeth with it, which ſwayeth and overpowers the ſoul to give credit unto it. But there be, you will ſay, ſtrong illuſions: true, bring them therefore to ſome rules of diſcerning. Bring all your joy, and peace, and confidence to the word; they go both together as a pair of indentures, one anſwers another. In Chriſt's transfiguration upon the mount, Moſes and Elias appeared together with Chriſt. In whatſoever transfiguration and raviſhment, we cannot find Moſes and Elias, and Chriſt to meet, that is, if what we find in us be not agreeable to the ſcriptures, we may well ſuſpect it as an illuſion.

That you may know the voice of the ſpirit of God from the carnal confidence of our own ſpirits, enquire,

1. What went before. 2. What accompanieth it. 3. What followeth after this raviſhing joy.

1. The word muſt go before it, in being aſſented unto by faith, and ſubmitted unto by anſwerable obedience. "In whom, after you believed the word of promiſe, you were ſealed." So that, if there be not firſt a believing of the word of promiſe, there is no ſealing. The God of peace give you joy in believing.—There muſt be a believing, a walking according to rule, or elſe no joy nor peace will be unto us. If we cannot bring the word and our hearts together, it is not God's, but Satan's ſealing a groundleſs preſumption, and it will end in deſpair. As Chriſt came by water and blood, ſo doth this teſtimony, it cometh after the other two. Firſt, the heart is carried to blood, and from

thence hath quiet; then followeth water, and our heart is waſhed, and changed, and then cometh this of the ſpirit; though it be not grounded on their teſtimony, but is above theirs, yet they go before. Where we thus find the work, we may know it to be right by the order of it.

It cometh after deep humiliation and abaſement. Though we know ourſelves to be the children of God in ſome ſuch meaſure, as we would not change our condition for all the world; yet we would have more evidence, we would have farther manifeſtation of God's countenance towards us; we are not ſatisfied—but wait. After we have long faſted, and our hearts melted and ſoftened, then God poureth water on the dry wilderneſs; and then it comes to paſs, through his goodneſs and mercy, that he comforts, and ſatisfies the deſires of the hungry ſoul. God will not ſuffer the ſpirit of his children to fail.

3. Likewiſe ſelf-denial in that which is pleaſing to us, it is made up with inward comfort; if this ſelf-denial be from a deſire of nearer communion with God, God will not fail them in what they deſire. There are wretches in the world, that will deny their ſinful nature nothing. If they have a diſpoſition to pride, they will be proud. If they have a luſt to be rich, to live in pleaſures, to follow the vanities of the times, they will do ſo; they will not ſay nay to corrupt nature in any thing. Will God vouchſafe to give any true joy or comfort of ſpirit to ſuch ones? No: thoſe that let looſe their natures without a check, ſhall never taſte of this hidden manna. But when we deny ourſelves, deny to hear or ſee that which may feed great corruption; when we deny to take delight in that, which we might if we would go the courſe of the world, there is a proportionable meaſure of joy, and peace, and comfort in a higher kind, made good to the ſoul. God is ſo good, we ſhall loſe nothing for parting with any thing for his ſake.

4. It is uſually found after conflict and victory, as a reward—"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." God's children, after ſtrong conflict with ſome temptation, or inward corruption, eſpecially that which accompanieth their diſpoſition and temper, when they have ſo conflicted as that at laſt they get the better, they find by experience ſweet enlargement of ſpirit. To ſtrive againſt them is a ſign of grace; but to get victory over them, even to ſubdue our enemies under us that riſe up againſt us, this bringeth true peace and joy.

5.

5. After we have put forth our ſpiritual ſtrength in holy duties, God crowns our endeavours with increaſe of comfort. A Chriſtian that takes pains with his heart, and will not ſerve God with that which coſt him nothing, enjoys that which the ſpiritual ſluggard wiſhes for, and goes without. God is ſo juſt, that thoſe men who have ſtriven to live according to the principles of nature, have found a contentment proportionable to their endeavours; ſome degree of pleaſure attends every good action, as a reward before a reward.

2. Beſides theſe things that go before this joy and teſtimony, there are, ſecondly, ſome things that do accompany it, if it be right, as,

1. This ſpiritual comfort enlargeth our hearts to a deſire after a high prizing the ordinances; ſo far is it from taking us off from a dependence upon them. In the word, and other means, it found comfort from God; therefore delights to be meeting God ſtill in his own ways. The eye of the ſoul is ſtrengthened to ſee further into truths, and is enabled more ſpiritually to underſtand the things it knew before; as in many of the ſame truths that wiſe men underſtand, they underſtood them when they were young, as when they were old, but then more clearly. So all truths are more clearly known by this. The ſpirit by which we are ſealed, is the ſpirit of illumination, not that it reveals any thing different from the word, but giveth a more large underſtanding, and inward knowledge of the ſame truths that were known before.

2. A liberty and boldneſs with God; for where the ſpirit is, there is a gracious liberty; that is, further enlargements from the law, guilt of ſin, and the fear of the wrath of God, that we can come with ſome boldneſs to his throne, and to him as our Father; a freedom to open our ſouls in prayer before him. This ſtands not ſo much in multitude of words, and forms of expreſſion but a filial boldneſs in our approaches in prayer. The hypocrite, eſpecially in extremity, cannot pray, his conſcience ſtops his mouth; but where the ſpirit ſealeth, it giveth this liberty, freely to open and ſpread our caſe before him, and call upon him, yea under the evidence of ſome diſpleaſure.

3. There doth likewiſe ordinarily accompany this ſealing of the ſpirit, Satan's malice and oppoſition; who, being caſt from heaven himſelf, envies this heaven upon earth in a creature of

meaner rank by creation than himſelf. We muſt not think to enjoy pure joy here without moleſtation. If there be danger of exalting above meaſure, we muſt look for ſome meſſenger of Satan.

After this witneſs it leaves the ſoul more humble: none more abaſed in themſelves, than thoſe that have neareſt communion with God; as we ſee in the angels that ſtand before God, and cover their faces—ſo Iſa. vi. Job, after God had manifeſted himſelf unto him, abhorred himſelf in duſt and aſhes. It brings with it a greater deſire of ſanctification and heavenly mindedneſs. As Elias aſcended up into heaven, his cloak fell by degrees from him: the higher our ſpirits are raiſed, the more we put off affections to earthly things.

2. Again, the end of this further manifeſtation of the ſpirit being encouragement to duty, or ſuffering in a good cauſe, the ſoul, by this witneſs of the ſpirit, finds increaſe of ſpiritual mettle, it finds itſelf ſteeled againſt oppoſition. Whilſt this wind filleth their ſails, they are carried on amain, and are frighted with nothing that ſtands in their way. See how the believers triumph upon the "ſpirits witneſſing to their ſpirits, that they are the ſons of God." Rom. viii.

God uſually reſerveth ſuch comforts for the worſt times, "Give wine to thoſe that be of heavy hearts," Prov. xxxi. The ſenſe of this love of Chriſt is better than wine. This refreſhing Paul had in the dungeon, and he ſung at midnight. After this witneſſing, therefore, look for ſome piece of ſervice to do, or trial to undergo.

Much muſt be left to God's fatherly wiſdom in this, who knows whom to cheer up, and when, and in what degree; and to what purpoſe and ſervice: and remember always, that theſe enlargements of ſpirit are as occaſional refreſhings in the way, not daily food to live upon. We maintain our life by faith, not by ſight or feeling. Feaſting is not for every day, except that feaſt of a good conſcience, which is continual; but I ſpeak of grand days, and high feaſts; theſe are diſpoſed as God ſeeth cauſe.

3. Where this ſealing of the ſpirit is, there followeth alſo upon it a lifting up of the head, in thinking of our latter end. it makes one think of the times to come with joy, as the Holy Ghoſt here mentioneth the day of redemption, as a motive to them

them to take heed that they did not grieve the ſpirit; intimating, they ſhould think of the day of redemption with a great deal of joy and comfort. The ſaints are deſcribed in ſcripture to be thoſe that "look for the appearing of Chriſt:" they are Chriſt's, and in him their reckonings and accounts are even. And therefore with delight they can often think and meditate upon the bleſſed times that are to come.

There are divers degrees of ſealing, ariſing from divers degrees of revelation. God firſt reveals his good will in his promiſes to all believers—this is the privilege of the church in theſe latter times: then by his ſpirit he reveals thoſe ſaving truths to thoſe that are his by a divine light. So that by argument drawn from power, they feel from truths in ſearching ſecrets, in caſting down, in raiſing up, in ſtaying the ſoul, they can ſeal to them that they are divine.

The ſame ſpirit that reveals the power of the word to me, reveals in particular mine own intereſt in all thoſe truths upon hearing them. Whereupon they are written in my heart, as if they had been made in particular to me: the comfortable truths in the word are tranſcribed into my heart anſwerable to the word; as that God in Chriſt is mine, forgiveneſs mine, grace mine: whereupon adoption in Chriſt is ſealed; which God ſealeth further to my ſoul by increaſe of comfort, as he ſeeth cauſe for encouragement. The ſame ſpirit that manifeſteth in me the word, I hear and read to be the truth of God, from the power and efficacy of it; the ſame ſpirit teacheth to apply it, and, in applying of it, ſealeth me.

Therefore we ought to deſire to be ſealed by the ſpirit, in regard of an holy impreſſion; and then that the holy ſpirit would ſhine upon his own graces, ſo as we may clearly ſee what is wrought in us above nature; and becauſe this is furthered by revealing his love in Chriſt in adopting of us, we muſt deſire of God to vouchſafe the ſpirit of revelation to reveal the myſteries of his truth unto us, and our portion in them in particular, and ſo our adoption; and in the mean time, to wait and attend his good pleaſure in the uſe of all good means. Thus we waiting, God will ſo far reveal himſelf in love to us, as ſhall aſſure us of his love, and ſtir up love again; and the ſame ſpirit, that is, a ſpirit of revelation, will be a ſpirit of ſanctification, and ſo of adoption. Dignity, and fitting qualities ſuitable to dignity, go both together.

In that grand enquiry about our condition, there is a great miſcarriage, when men will begin the firſt work of the Father in election, then paſs to redemption by Chriſt. I am God's, and Chriſt hath redeemed me; and never think of the action of the third perſon in ſanctification, which is the neareſt action upon the ſoul, as the third perſon himſelf is neareſt unto us. And ſo fetch their firſt riſe where they ſhould ſet up their laſt reſt. Whereas we ſhould begin our enquiry in the work of the third perſon, which is next unto us; and then upon good grounds we may know our redemption and election.

The holy ſpirit is both a ſpirit of revelation, and of ſanctification together, as hath been ſaid: for, together with opening the love of the Father and the Son, he fitteth us by grace for communication with them.

People out of ſelf-love will have conceits of the Father's and Son's love, ſeparate from the work of the ſpirit upon their hearts, which will prove a dangerous deluſion. Although the whole work of grace by the ſpirit, ariſe from the Father's and Son's love, witneſſed by the ſpirit, yet the proof of the Father's love to us in particular, ariſeth from ſome knowledge of the work of the ſpirit. The error is not in thinking of the Father's and Son's love, but in a ſtrengthening themſelves by a pleaſing powerleſs thought of it, againſt the work of grace by the ſpirit, which their corruption withſtands. So they will carve out of the work of the Trinity what they think agreeable to their luſts; whereas otherwiſe, if their hearts were upright, they would, for this very end, think of God's love, and Chriſt's, to quicken them to duty, and to arm them againſt corruption.

The day of redemption.

There is a double redemption; redemption of the ſoul by the firſt coming of Chriſt to ſhed his blood for us; redemption of our bodies from corruption, by his ſecond coming. We have not the perfect conſummation and accompliſhment of that which Chriſt wrought in his firſt coming, till his ſecond coming; then there ſhall be a total redemption of our ſouls and bodies, and conditions. There is a double redemption, as there is a double coming of Chriſt, the firſt and the ſecond; the one to redeem our ſouls from ſin and Satan, and to give us a title to heaven; the other to redeem our bodies from corruption, when "Chriſt ſhall come to be glorious in his ſaints." As likewiſe

wiſe, there is a double reſurrection, the firſt and the ſecond, and a double regeneration of ſoul and body.

In ſickneſs and weakneſs of body, or when age hath overtaken us, that we cannot live long here, and the horror of the grave, the houſe of darkneſs, if preſented to us, Oh let us think there will be a redemption of our bodies as well as of our ſouls. Chriſt will redeem our bodies from corruption, as he came to work the redemption of our ſouls from ſin and death; and he that will redeem our bodies out of the grave, will redeem his church out of miſery, he will call the Jews; he that will do the greater, will do the inferior. When we hear of this, let us think with comfort of all the promiſes that are yet unperformed.

Secondly, full redemption is not yet. What need I bring ſcriptures to prove it? It is a point that every mans's experience teacheth. Alas! let our bodies ſpeak, we are not free from ſickneſs and diſeaſes; nay, what is our life, but a going to corruption? the ſentence is paſſed upon us, earth returneth to earth; till death we are going to death: ſo beſides ſickneſs and weakneſs here, we muſt die, and after death be ſubject to corruption. The Apoſtle in this reſpect calleth our body "a vile body." As for our ſouls, though they be freed from the guilt and damnation of ſin, yet there are remainders of corruption that breed fear and terror; and though they be freed from the rule of ſatan, yet not from his moleſtation and vexation by temptations. In a word, our whole ſtate and condition in this world is a ſtate and condition of miſery, we are followed with many afflictions, ſo that there is not yet perfect redemption, whether we look to body or ſoul, or eſtate, the body being ſubject to diſeaſes, the ſoul to infirmities, the ſtate to miſery.

But there is a day appointed for it.

By a day we are not to underſtand the time meaſured by the courſe of the ſun in twenty four hours, but in the ſcripture meaning, a day is a ſet time of mercy or judgment. As there was a ſolemn day, the fulneſs of time, for the working of the firſt redemption, ſo there is a ſolemn time ſet for the ſecond redemption, when all the children of God ſhall be gathered; thoſe that lie in the duſt ſhall be raiſed, and for ever glorified. It is the day of all days; the day which by way of excellence, is called *that day* in the ſcriptures, and *the day of the Lord.* The day that we ſhould think of every day, eſpecially in ſickneſs, and trouble, and croſſes,

croſſes, and moleſtations from the wicked world, and in a ſenſe of the remainders of corruption. There is a day of redemption to come that will make amends for all. The frequent thoughts of that day would comfort us, and keep us from ſhrinking in any affliction and trouble; it would move us to carriage and converſation anſwerable to our hopes, and alſo it would help to fit us; it would infuſe a deſire of qualification to be prepared for that great day.

But how little of our time is ſpent in thoughts this way? If we could oft think of the day of redemption, our lives would be otherwiſe, both in regard of gracious, as alſo of comfortable carriage. Should we be diſconſolate at every loſs and croſs, at ſickneſſes, and the thought of death, when we ſhall be turned into our firſt principle, the earth? If we did think of the day of redemption, when all ſhall be reſtored again, all the decays of nature, and the image of God be perfectly ſtamped; the thought of this ſhould make us go willingly to our graves, knowing that all this is but a preparation for the great day of redemption. The firſt day of redemption, when Chriſt came to redeem our ſouls, and to give us a title to heaven, it was in the expectation of all good people before Chriſt; they are ſaid "to wait for the conſolation of Iſrael;" that was the character to know thoſe bleſſed people by. And what ſhould be the character of gracious ſouls now, but to be ſuch as wait for the coming of Chriſt? How often in the Epiſtles of St Paul is it? "There is a crown of righteouſneſs for me, and for all that wait for the appearing of Chriſt."

There was a year of jubilee among the Jews every fifty years; then all that were in bondage were ſet at liberty. So at this bleſſed jubilee, this glorious day of redemption, all that are in bondage of death, and under corruption, ſhall be ſet at everlaſting liberty. No queſtion but the poor ſervants that were vexed with hard maſters, they thought of the jubilee; and thoſe that had their poſſeſſions taken away, they thought of the jubilee, the day of recovering all. So let us often think of this everlaſting jubilee, when we ſhall recover all that we loſt, for ever to keep it, and never to loſe it again, as we did in the firſt creation. Let us oft think of this day; it will infuſe vigour and ſtrength into all our converſation. Indeed, to the ungodly it is not a day of redemption, but a day of judgement, and the revelation of the juſt wrath of God; when their ſins ſhall be laid open, and receive a ſentence anſwerable.

Alas,

Alas! there is such a deal of atheism in the world, (and the seeds of it in the best, unless it be wrought out daily) that we forget the God of vengeance, and the day of vengeance. Would men go on in sins of conscience, if they thought of this last day? it is impossible. Such courses proceed from this abominable root of atheism, and unbelief; for had they but a slight faith, it would be effectual to alter their course in some measure: therefore the Scripture gives them the name of fools, though they would be thought to be the only wise men. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God;" and what follows? "corrupt are they, and abominable." The cause of all is, the fool hath said in his heart, he will needs force it upon his heart, that there is no God, hell nor heaven, nor judgment; thence come abominable courses.

Grieve not the holy spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

FROM the consideration of all that hath been formerly spoken of, the sealing of the spirit to the day of redemption, there arise these four conclusions.

First, that we may attain unto a knowledge that we are in that state of grace.

Secondly, that upon knowledge of our state in grace for the present, we may be assured of our future full redemption.

Thirdly, that this assured knowledge is wrought by the spirit.

Fourthly, that the consideration of this assurance wrought by the spirit, is an effectual argument to dissuade from grieving the spirit.

For the first—We may know we are in the state of grace: 1. Because the apostle would not have used an argument moving, not to grieve the spirit, from a thing unknown or guessed at; it is an ill manner of reasoning to argue from a thing unknown.

2. Again, sealing of us by the spirit, is not in regard of God, but ourselves. God knoweth who are his, but we know not that we are his, but by sealing.

3. The scope of the scriptures indited by the spirit, is for comfort,

comfort, the apoſtle ſaith ſo directly; and what comfort is there in an uncertain condition, wherein a man knows not but he may be a reprobate? Wherefore came our Saviour into the world, and took our nature upon him? why became he a curſe for us? why hath he carried our nature into heaven, and there appears for us, till he hath brought us home to himſelf? but that he would have us out of all doubt of his love, after once by faith we have received him? Whence proceed thoſe commandments to believe, thoſe checks of unbelievers, the commendation of them that did believe, thoſe upbraidings of doubting, as ſpringing from unbelief. To what uſe are the ſacraments, but to ſeal unto us the benefits of Chriſt, if, upon all this, we ſhould ſtill doubt of God's love, eſpecially, when beſides the ſealing of the promiſes to us, we are ſealed ourſelves by the ſpirit of promiſe.

Obj.—This is true if we know, that we do believe.

Anſ.—It is the office of the ſpirit, as to work faith and other graces, ſo to reveal them to us: every grace of God is a light of itſelf, coming from the Father of lights; and it is the property of light, not only to diſcover other things, but itſelf too: and it is the office of the ſpirit to give further light to this light, by ſhining upon his own grace in us. An excellent place for this is in 1 Cor. ii. 12. "We have received the ſpirit that is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." In the mouth of two or three witneſſes ſhall every thing be confirmed; one witneſs is the ſpirit of man, which knows the things that are in man; the other witneſs is, the ſpirit of God, witneſſing to our ſpirits that we are the children of God. Here is light added to light, witneſs added to witneſs, the greater witneſs of the ſpirit added to the leſs of our ſpirits. The apoſtle joins them both together, "My conſcience beareth me witneſs through the Holy Ghoſt."

Object.—Man's heart is deceitful.

Anſ.—But the ſpirit of God in man's heart is not deceitful; it is too holy to deceive, and too wiſe to be deceived in this aſſurance. We plough with the ſpirit's heifer, or we could not find out this riddle. Where there is an object to be ſeen, and an eye to ſee, and light to diſcover the object to the eye, ſight muſt needs follow. In a true believer, after he is enlightened,

as

as there is grace to be ſeen, and an eye of faith to ſee, ſo there is a light of the ſpirit diſcovering that grace to that inward ſight. In the bottom of a clear river, a clear eyeſight may ſee any thing—where nothing is, nothing can be ſeen. It is an evidence that the patrons of doubting have little grace in them, and much boldneſs in making themſelves a meaſure for others. Thoſe that are baſe born know their mothers better than their fathers. The church of Rome is all for the mother, but the babes of Chriſt know their Father. The remainder of corruption will indeed ſtill be breeding doubts; but it is the office of the ſpirit of faith to quell them as they ariſe. We are too ready in time of temptation to doubt; we need not help the tempter, by holding it a duty to doubt; this is to light a candle before the devil, as we uſe to ſpeak.

Queſt.—May not there be doubtings where there is true faith? may not a true believer be without aſſurance?

Anſw.—There be three ranks of chriſtians. Firſt, ſome that are yet under the ſpirit of bondage, that like little children do all for fear. Secondly, thoſe that are under the ſpirit of adoption, and do many things well, but yet are not altogether free from fear: theſe are like thoſe children who are moved with reverence to obey their parents, and yet find their commands ſomewhat irkſome unto them. The third are ſuch, as by the ſpirit of adoption, are carried with large ſpirits to obey their father; and herein like unto thoſe children, that not only obey, but take a delight in it, upon a judgement that both obedience and the thing wherein they obey is good; this we ought to labour for. But we find many chriſtians in the ſecond rank, many truly believe in Chriſt by ſome light let into their hearts by the ſpirit of adoption, who are not yet fully aſſured of the love of Chriſt. There is the act of faith, and the fruit of faith; the act of faith is to caſt ourſelves upon God's mercy in Chriſt; the fruit of faith is in believing to be aſſured of this. We muſt know that faith is one thing, aſſurance another. They may have faith, and yet want a double aſſurance: firſt, aſſurance of their faith, being not able at all times to judge of their own act: likewiſe, ſecondly, aſſurance of their ſtate in grace, as in time of deſertion and temptation. A ſoul at ſuch a time caſts itſelf upon Chriſt, as knowing comfort is there to be had, tho' he be not ſure of it for himſelf. And this the ſoul doth out of obedience, though not out of feeling, as the poor man in the goſpel,

goſpel, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief" The ſoul often times out of the deep, cries, and in the dark truſts in God; and this is the bold adventure of faith; the firſt object whereof, is Chriſt held out in a promiſe, and not aſſurance, which ſpringeth from the firſt act, when it pleaſeth God to ſhine upon the ſoul, and is a reward of glorifying God's mercy in Chriſt by caſting the ſoul upon his truth and goodneſs. Aſſurance is God's ſeal, faith is our ſeal; when we ſet to our ſeal by believing, he ſets to his ſeal, aſſuring us of our condition. We yield firſt the conſent and the aſſent of faith, and then God puts his ſeal to the contract. There muſt be a good title before a confirmation, a planting before a rooting and eſtabliſhing, the bargain before the earneſt. Some would have faith to be an overpowering light of the ſoul, whereby undoubtedly they believe themſelves to be Chriſt's, and Chriſt to be theirs: which ſtumbleth many a weak, yet true chriſtian; for this is rather the fruit of a ſtrong faith, than the act of a weak, which ſtruggleth with doubting, until it hath gotten the upper hand. True it is, there muſt be ſo much light let into the ſoul, as the ſoul may rely upon Chriſt, and this light muſt be diſcovered by the ſpirit; and ſuch a light as ſhews a ſpecial love of Chriſt to the ſoul. And again, it is true that we are not to take up our reſt in the light, until the heart be further ſubdued. As many are too haſty to conclude of a good condition upon uncertain ſigns, before they have attained unto fuller aſſurance; but yet we muſt not deny faith where this ſtrong aſſurance is wanting, ſo far as to conclude againſt ourſelves; if there be deſires, putting on, an endeavour to conflict againſt the riſing of unbelief, with a high prizing of the favour of God in Chriſt, ſo as to value it above all things. Degrees do not vary the kind, weakneſs may ſtand with truth; but where truth is, there will be an inceſſant deſire of future ſealing.

The ſecond concluſion: We may upon the knowledge of our preſent eſtate in grace be aſſured for the time to come. For this ſealing is to the day of redemption: that is, till we be put into full poſſeſſion of what we now believe; and beſides, ſealing is for ſecuring for the time to come, and our Saviour's promiſe is, that though he departed from them, yet the comforter ſhould abide with them for ever, John xiv. And why are we certain of the favour of God to our comfort for the preſent, but that we doubt not of it for the time to come?

Faith

Faith and love, and theſe graces, they never fail finally; therefore when the ſcripture ſpeaks of faith, it ſpeaks of ſalvation by it for the preſent: as if a man ſhould be in heaven preſently ſo ſoon as he believes. "We are ſaved by faith," ſay the ſcriptures. We are not yet ſaved; but the meaning is, we are ſet by faith into a ſtate of ſalvation. Being put into Chriſt by faith, we "are riſen with Chriſt, and ſit in heavenly places with him." Faith makes the things to come, preſent; and faith believes, that "neither things preſent, nor things to come, ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the love of God in Chriſt." So that aſſurance is not only for pardon for the preſent, but for the time to come. We are ſealed to the day of redemption, and who can reverſe God's ſeal, or God's act and deed? Grace is the earneſt penny of glory: God hath made a covenant, and given earneſt—he will not loſe it; the earneſt is never taken away, but filled up. If we be aſſured of grace for the preſent, we may be ſure it ſhall be made up full in glory hereafter. If the ſpirit of Chriſt be in us, the ſame ſpirit that raiſed Chriſt from the dead, will raiſe us up likewiſe, and not leave us until we be in full redemption, "we ſhall awake, filled with his image."

No oppoſition ſhall prevail; God hath ſet us as a ſeal on his right hand, to keep us, ay, and on his breaſt (as the high prieſt had the twelve tribes) to love us, and on his ſhoulder, to ſupport us. The marked and ſealed ones, in Ezek. ix. and Rev. vii. were ſecured from all deſtruction. If we be in Chriſt our rock, temptations and oppoſitions are but as waves; they may daſh upon us, but they break themſelves.

Queſt.—Why then do we pray for the forgiveneſs of ſins?

Anſ.—We pray for a clearer evidence of what we have. Secondly, as the end is ordained, ſo the means muſt be uſed.—God doth and will pardon ſin; and therefore we muſt pray for pardon, as a means ordained. Thirdly, prayer doth not prejudice the certainty of a thing. Chriſt prayeth for what he was moſt ſure of—John xvii. "I pray for them which thou haſt given me, for they are thine."

Pregnant for the proof of this point is that of Peter, "We are begotten again to a lively hope," a hope of that life which maketh lively. Oh, but we are weak! true, but we are kept by the power of God: an inheritance is not only kept for us, but we are kept for it.

Object.

Object.—But Satan is ſtrong, and his malice is more than his ſtrength?

Anſw.—True, but we are kept as in a garriſon, we have a guard about us.

Object.—All this is true, while faith holdeth, but that may fail?

Anſw.—No, we are kept by the power of God through faith; God keepeth our faith, and us by faith.

Object.—But the time is long between us and ſalvation, and many dangers may fall out?

Anſw.—Be it ſo, that the time is long, yet we are kept unto ſalvation, even until the day of redemption; for the ſpirit, by virtue of the covenant, puts the fear of God into our hearts, that we ſhall never depart from him. God doth not promiſe what we ſhall do of ourſelves, but what he will do in us, and by us. Thus the Holy Ghoſt putteth a ſhield into our hands to ward off all objections, and helps us to ſubdue the reaſonings that are apt to riſe within us againſt this bleſſed hope. So that this happy condition is not only ſure to us, but God hath aſſured us of it. God's gracious indulgence is ſuch, he ſees here we go thro' a wilderneſs, and are moleſted every way; therefore he would have us aſſured of a bleſſed condition to come. So good is God, he doth not only find out a glorious way of redemption by the blood of his Son, God man, but he acquaints us with it in the days of our pilgrimage. 1. Partly, that we may glorify him, that he may have the praiſe before hand of what good he intends us: for aſſurance of that bleſſed condition will ſtir our ſpirits to bleſs God. What the thing itſelf would work, faith works the ſame in ſome meaſure. Therefore, St. Peter, 1 Pet. i. "Bleſſed be God, (ſaith he), who hath begotten us again to a lively hope of an inheritance immortal, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reſerved in the heavens." Why doth he bleſs God before we have it? becauſe we are as ſure of it as if we had it. What is revealed before hand, is praiſed for before hand. God would have us aſſured, that he may have glory.

2. Partly to comfort us; for faith is effectual to work that comfort which the thing preſent would do in ſome meaſure. What comfort would the ſoul have, if it ſhould ſee heaven open, and itſelf entering into it, if redemption were at hand? The ſame faith

faith works in ſome meaſure. What is more ſure than the thing itſelf? What more comfortable than faith in it?

When the Iſraelites were in the wilderneſs going to Canaan, they had many promiſes that they ſhould come to Canaan, and many extraordinary helps to lead them thither, the pillar, and cloud, and angel: and God, out of indulgence, condeſcending to their weakneſs, gave them ſome grapes of Canaan; he put it into the mind of the ſpies to bring off the fruits. So God gives us ſome work of his bleſſed ſpirit, whereby he would have us aſſured and ſealed to the day of redemption.

The third concluſion is this, that the ſpirit doth ſeal us. This cannot be otherwiſe; for who can eſtabliſh us in the love of God, but he that knows the mind of God towards us; and who knows the mind of God, but the ſpirit of God?

Them am I ſealed, when I do not only believe, but, by a reflecting act of the ſoul, know I do believe: and this reflection, though it be by reaſon, yet it is by reaſon enabled by the ſpirit. Our ſpirits by the ſpirit only can diſcern of ſpiritual acts: it is not for us to know things above nature. None can know the meaning of our broken deſires, ſo as to help us in our infirmities, but that ſpirit that ſtirred up thoſe deſires. Again, none knows the grievances of our ſpirits, but our own ſpirits, and the ſpirit of God, who knows all the turnings and corners of the ſoul.

Who can mortify thoſe ſtrong corruptions, that would hinder us in the way to heaven, but the ſpirit cloathing our ſpirit with power from above? Who purifieth the conſcience, but he that is above conſcience? Who can raiſe our ſpirits above all temptations and troubles, but that ſpirit of power that is above all?

The ſtrength and vigour of any creature is from the ſpirits; and the ſtrength of the ſpirits of all fleſh is from the holy Spirit, whoſe office is to put ſpirit into our ſpirit.

As God redeemed us with his blood, ſo God muſt apply this blood, that conſcience may be quieted. He only can ſubdue the rebellion of our ſpirits, and ſoften our hearts, to make them fit for ſealing. The ſpirit only can ſo report the mercy of God to our ſouls, as to perſuade and work our hearts to this aſſurance, otherwiſe we would never yield. For partly, the greatneſs of the ſtate is ſuch, that none but God can aſſure; and

partly, the miſgiving and unbelief of our heart is ſuch, that none but God can ſubdue it, the thing being ſo great, and our deſervings ſo little, being unworthy of the things of this life, much more of that eternal happineſs; this cannot be done without the high and glorious ſpirit of God.

How earneſt and deſirous then is both the Father and the Son to ſave us, who pleaſed to ſend ſuch an orator and ambaſſador as is equal with themſelves, to perſuade us, to aſſure us, to fit us for ſalvation? And how gracious is the ſpirit, who will vouchſafe to have ſuch communion with ſuch poor ſinful ſpirits as ours? And ſhould not this work upon our hearts a care not to grieve the holy ſpirit?—Now we come to the fourth concluſion.

The fourth concluſion is, that the ſealing of the ſpirit unto ſalvation, ſhould be a ſtrong prevailing argument not to grieve the ſpirit, that is, not to ſin; for ſin only grieves the ſpirit. "The grace of God (ſaith Paul to Titus) that bringeth ſalvation." Chriſt appeared; and what is Chriſt but grace? Chriſt appeared, and the free favour of God in Chriſt, whereby we are aſſured of ſalvation, which teacheth us what to do—"to deny all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent world." Even the conſideration of the benefits of Chriſt, that are paſt, ſuch as came with Chriſt's firſt coming. But this is not all, ver. 13. "Looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt." The ſecond coming of Chriſt likewiſe enforceth the ſame care of holineſs. "Our converſation is in heaven," and not as theirs, (ſpoken of in the former verſe) whoſe end is damnation, whoſe belly is their God, who mind earthly things: no, we mind heavenly things; and theſe heavenly deſires, from whence ſprung they, but from the certain expectation of our Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall change our vile bodies, &c. that is, ſhall redeem us fully, even our bodies, as well as our ſouls?

It is an argument of force, whether we be not yet ſealed, or be ſealed; if not ſealed, then grieve not him whoſe only office it is to ſeal, entertain his motions, give way to him, that he may have ſcope and liberty of working.

Set no reaſons againſt his reaſons, hearken to no counſel againſt his counſel, ſtand not out his perſuaſions any longer, but yield

yield up your ſpirits to him, leſt he put a period to his patience. He is long-ſuffering, but not always ſuffering. If he gives us up to our own ſpirit, we ſhall only be witty to work out our own damnation. We are not given up to our own ſpirit, till after many repulſes of this holy ſpirit; and, at length, what now will not ſerve for an argument to perſuade us, ſhall be uſed hereafter as an argument to torment us. The ſpirit will help our ſpirits to repeat and recal all the motions to our own good, that we formerly put back. We ſhould think, when conſcience ſpeaks in us, God ſpeaks; and when the ſpirit moves us, it is God that moves us, and then all excuſe will be cut off: the anſwer will be, Did not I tell you of this by conſcience, my deputy? did not I move you to this good by mine own ſpirit? Take heed of keeping out any light; for light, where it doth not come in and ſoften, hardens. None ſo hard hearted as thoſe upon whom the light hath ſhined. There is more to be hoped from a man that hath a natural conſcience, than from him whoſe heart and ſpirit hath been long beaten on: there is more to be hoped from a heathen Pilate, than a proud Phariſee.—Thoſe that will not be ſealed to their ſalvation, it is juſt with God that they ſhould be ſealed up to their deſtruction. The ſoul without the ſpirit is darkneſs and confuſion, full of ſelf-accuſing, and ſelf-tormenting thoughts. If we let the ſpirit come in, it will ſcatter all, and ſettle the ſoul in a ſweet quiet.

For thoſe that have been ſealed by the ſpirit, and yet not ſo fully as to ſilence all doubts about their eſtate: thoſe ſhould, out of that beginning of comfort which they feel, ſtudy to be pliable to the ſpirit, for further increaſe. The ſpirit ſealeth by degrees. As our care of pleaſing the ſpirit increaſeth, ſo our comfort increaſeth; our light will increaſe as the morning light unto the perfect day. Yielding to the ſpirit in one holy motion, will cauſe him to lead us to another, and ſo on forwards, until we be more deeply acquainted with the whole counſel of God concerning our ſalvation; otherwiſe, if we give way to any contrary luſt, darkneſs will grow upon our ſpirits unawares, and we ſhall be left in an unſettled condition, as thoſe who travel in the twilight, that cannot perfectly find out their way. We ſhall be on and off, not daring to yield wholly to our luſts, becauſe of a work of grace begun: nor yield wholly to the ſpirit, becauſe we have let ſome unruly affection get too much ſtrength in us; and ſo our ſpirits are without comfort, and our profeſſion without glory.

We ſhall ly open to ſatan, if he be let looſe to winnow our faith; for if our ſtate come to be queſtioned, we have nothing to alledge but the truth of our graces; and if we have not uſed the ſpirit well, we ſhall not have power to alledge them, nor to look upon any grace wrought in us, but upon thoſe luſts and ſins whereby we have grieved the ſpirit; they will be ſet in order before us, and ſo ſtare us in the face, that we cannot but fix our thoughts upon them. And Satan will not loſe ſuch an advantage, but will tempt us to call the work of grace in queſtion; which, though it be a true work, yet for want of the light of the ſpirit to diſcern it, we cannot ſee it to our comfort. Whereas if the ſpirit ſhould witneſs unto us the truth of our ſtate, and the ſincerity of our graces, we ſhall be able to hold our own, and thoſe temptations will vaniſh.

For thoſe that the holy ſpirit hath ſet a clearer ſtamp upon, that do not queſtion their condition, they of all others ſhould not grieve the ſpirit.

1. A ſpirit of ingenuouſneſs will hinder them, and ſtir up a ſhame in them to requite ſo ill ſuch a friend. Nothing ſo ingenuous as grace. What is commendable in nature, is in greater perfection in grace. How doth the conſciouſneſs of unkindneſs to a friend that hath deſerved well of us, trouble our ſpirits, that we know not with what face to look upon him? And will not unkindneſs to the ſpirit make us aſhamed to lift up our face to heaven?

2. Benefits are bonds, and the greater favour, the ſtronger obligation. Now what greater favour is there, than for the ſpirit to renew us according to the image of God our glorious Saviour, we who carried the image of Satan before? And by this to appropriate us unto God, to be laid up in his treaſure, as carrying his ſtamp; and by this to be ſeparated from the vile condition of the world. Although we carry in us the ſeeds of the ſame corruption that the worſt doth, differing nothing from them, but in God's free grace, and the fruits of it. For God to eſteem ſo of us, that have no worthineſs of our own, but altogether perſons not worthy to be beloved; as to make our unworthineſs a foil, to ſet out the freeneſs of his love, in making us worthy, whom he found not ſo. For the ſpirit, by ſealing of us, to ſecure us in the midſt of all ſpiritual dangers; and to hide us as his ſecret ones, that the evil one ſhould not touch us to hurt us.—Theſe, as they are favours of a high

high nature, the more care they require to walk worthy of them. We cannot but forget ourſelves, before we yield to any thing againſt that dignity the ſpirit hath ſealed us to.

3. Nature helped with ordinary education, moveth every man to carry himſelf anſwerable to his condition; a magiſtrate as a magiſtrate, a ſubject as a ſubject, a child as a child; and we think it diſgraceful to do otherwiſe: and ſhall that which is diſgraceful to nature, not be much more diſgraceful to nature renewed and advanced by the ſpirit? And indeed, as we ſhould not, ſo we cannot grieve the ſpirit in ſo far as we are renewed. Our new nature will not ſuffer us to diſſemble, to be worldly, to be carnal, as the world is; we cannot but be for God and his truth; we cannot but expreſs what we are, and whoſe we are.

It is impoſſible a man ſhould care for heaven, that doth not care for the beginnings of heaven: he cannot be ſaid to care for full redemption and glory, that doth not care for the ſpirit of grace: fulneſs of grace is the beſt thing in glory; other things, as peace and joy, and the like, they are but the ſhinings forth of this fulneſs of grace in glory.

Again, when the ſpirit aſſureth us of God's love in the greateſt fruits of it, as it doth when it aſſureth this redemption: That love kindles love again, and love conſtrains us, by a ſweet neceſſity, to yield cheerful willing obedience in all things: there is nothing more active and fuller of invention, than love, and there is nothing that love ſtudies more than how to pleaſe, there is nothing that it fears more than to diſpleaſe. It is a neat affection, and will indure nothing offenſive, either to itſelf, or the ſpirit of ſuch as we love: and this love the ſpirit teaches the heart; and love teaches us not only our duty, but to do it in a loving and acceptable manner. It carries out the whole ſtream of the ſpirit with it, and rules all, whilſt it rules, and will not ſuffer the ſoul to divert to bye-things, much leſs to contrary.

Again, theſe graces that are converſant about that condition which the ſpirit aſſureth us of, as faith and hope, are purging and purifying graces, working a ſuitableneſs in the ſoul to the things believed, and hoped for: and the excellency of the things believed and hoped for, have ſuch a working upon the ſoul, that it will not ſuffer the ſoul to defile itſelf. Our hopes on high, will lead us to ways on high; therefore whilſt theſe graces are exerciſed about theſe objects, the ſoul cannot but be in a pleaſing frame.

It hath been an old cavil, that certainty of ſalvation breeds ſecurity and looſeneſs of life. And what is there that an ill diſpoſed ſoul cannot ſuck poiſon out of? A man may as truly ſay, the ſea burns, or the fire cools: there is nothing quickens a ſoul more to chearful obedience, than aſſurance of God's love, and that our labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord; this is the ſcripture's logic and rhetoric to inforce and perſuade a holy life from knowledge of our preſent eſtate in grace. "I beſeech you by the mercies of God," ſaith St. Paul: what mercies? ſuch as he had ſpoken of before. Juſtification, ſanctification, aſſurance that all ſhall work together for good, that nothing ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the love of God in Chriſt: all duties tend to aſſurance, or ſpring from aſſurance.

God's intention is to bring us to heaven by a way of love, and cheerfulneſs; as all the ways towards us in our ſalvation, are in love. And this is the ſcope of the covenant of grace; and for this end he ſends the ſpirit of adoption into our heart, that we may have a child-like liberty with God in all our addreſſes to him. When he offers himſelf to us as a father, it is fit we ſhould offer ourſelves to him as children; nature teaches a child, the more he deſires his father's love, the more he fears to diſpleaſe him. And he is judged to be graceleſs, that will therefore venture to offend his father, becauſe he knows he neither can, or will diſinherit him. Certain it is, the more ſurely we know God hath begotten us to ſo glorious an inheritance, the more it will work upon our bowels, to take all to heart that may any way touch him: this wrought upon David, when the prophet told him, God hath done this and this for thee, and would have done more, if that had been too little; it melted him preſently into an humble confeſſion. Thoſe that have felt the power of the ſpirit of adoption on their hearts, will both by a divine inſtinct, as alſo by ſtrength of reaſon, be carried to all thoſe courſes wherein they ſhall approve themſelves to their father. Inſtinct of nature ſtrengthened with theſe grounds, will move ſtrongly.

To conclude this diſcourſe, let chriſtians therefore be careful to preſerve and cheriſh the work of aſſurance and ſealing in them.

What God doth for us, he doth by grace in us; he will preſerve us, that we ſhall not fall from him, by putting the grace of fear into us. He will keep us—but by what means? "The peace

peace of God, which paſſeth all underſtanding, ſhall guard our heart." God maketh our calling and election ſure in us, by ſtirring our hearts up to be diligently exerciſed in adding one grace unto another, and in growing in every grace, as 2 Pet. i. Therefore we muſt attend upon all ſpiritual means of growth and quickening: ſo ſhall you have a further entrance into the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt: that is, you ſhall have more evident knowledge of your entrance into the kingdom of grace here, and likewiſe into the kingdom of glory hereafter. Thoſe that do not ſo, ſhall have no comfort either from the time paſt, for they ſhall forget they were purged from their ſins, or from thoughts of the time to come, for they ſhall not be able to ſee things far off.

2. If aſſurance be in a leſſer degree, yet yield not to temptations and carnal reaſonings: if our evidences be not ſo fair, yet we will not part with our inheritance. Coins, like old groats that have little of the ſtamp left, yet are current. We loſe our comfort many times, becauſe we yield ſo eaſily, becauſe we have not ſuch a ſtrong and clear ſeal of ſalvation as we would; to be born down that we have none at all, is a great weakneſs: exerciſe therefore the little faith thou haſt, in ſtriving againſt ſuch objections, and it will be a means to preſerve the ſeal of the ſpirit.

3. Becauſe this ſealing is gradual, we ſhould pray as Paul, Epheſ. 1. "for a ſpirit of revelation," that we may be more ſealed: (the Epheſians were ſealed, for whom Paul prays, and ſo the Coloſſians; yet) that God would reveal to their ſpirits, more and more, their excellent condition. There are riches of aſſurance; the apoſtle would have them to labour not only for aſſurance, but for the riches of it; that will bring rich comfort, and joy and peace. Times of temptations and trial may come, and ſuch as, if we have not ſtrong aſſurance, we may be ſorely troubled, and call all into queſtion. This may be the ſad condition of God's own children, and from this, that in times of peace, they contented themſelves with a leſſer degree of this aſſurance and ſealing.

Laſtly, be watchful over your own hearts and ways, that according to what you have now learned, you grieve not the ſpirit, "for by it you are ſealed;" intimating, that if in any thing we withſtand and grieve the ſpirit, we ſhall in ſo doing, prejudice ourſelves, and ſuffer in the comfort and evidence of our ſealing.

THE

CHURCH'S COMPLAINT

AND

CONFIDENCE.

IN THREE SERMONS.

ISAIAH lxiv. 6, 7, 8.

" *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are*
" *as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities*
" *like the wind have taken us away.*

" *And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that ſtirreth up him-*
" *ſelf to take hold of thee: for thou haſt hid thy face from us, and*
" *haſt conſumed us, becauſe of our iniquities.*

" *But now, O Lord, thou art our Father, we are the clay, and thou*
" *our potter; we are all the work of thine hands.*"

THE words are part of a bleſſed form of prayer, preſcribed to the church long before they were in captivity. It begins at the 15th verſe of the former chapter, " Look down from heaven, behold from the habitation of thy holineſs," &c. The bleſſed prophet Iſaiah was carried with the wings of prophetical ſpirit over many years, and ſees the time to come, the time of the captivity; and God, by his ſpirit, doth direct them a prayer, and this is part of the form. For God in mercy to his people, as he foreſaw before what would become of them, ſo he vouchſafes them comfort beforehand. It is very uſeful to uſe forms: the 102d pſalm, it is a form of pouring out the ſoul to God, when

when any man is in misery, as you see in the preface. These verses are a part of a form prescribed for the pouring forth an afflicted soul—"We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses," &c. These words are,

First, an humble confession of sin.

And first of the sins of their nature, of their persons themselves, "We are all as an unclean thing."

And then of the sins of actions, "all our righteousness is as filthy rags."

And then in the third place, a confession of the sin of non-proficiency, of obduration, and senselessness, that notwithstanding the corrections of God, they were little the better. "There is none that calleth upon thy name, or that stirs up himself to take hold of thee."

In the second place, there is an humble complaint of the miserable estate they were in by their sins. "We all fade as a leaf, our iniquities like the wind have taken us away, thou hast hid thy face from us, and consumed us, because of our iniquities." The complaint is set forth in these four clauses.

And then an humble supplication, and deprecation to God, in verse 8. and so forward. "Now, Lord, thou art our Father, we are the clay, thou art the potter, we are all the work of thy hands," &c. These be the parcels of this portion of scripture.

But we are all as an unclean thing, &c.

Here is first an humble confession. And first observe in general, what afflictions will do, especially afflictions sanctified; that which all the prophetical sermons could not do, that which all the threatnings could not do, affliction now doth. Now when they were in captivity and base estate, they fall a humbling themselves. So the Prodigal, nothing could humble him but afflictions. "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept;" all denunciations of judgement before they came to the waters of Babylon could not make them weep. One affliction will do more than twenty Sermons, when God teacheth and chastiseth too, when together with teaching there is correction, then it is effectual. And this is the reason of God's course, why when nothing

thing elſe will do, he humbles his people with afflictions; becauſe he cannot otherwiſe teach them.

Affliction withdraws that which is the fuel of ſin: for what doth a ſinful diſpoſition feed on? upon pleaſures, and riches, &c. Now when affliction either takes theſe things away, or imbitters them if we have them: then that which ſin carried us to, and what we fed our own baſe earthly luſts with, being gone, when a man is ſtripped of theſe, he begins to know himſelf what he is; he was drunk before. I deem a man in proſperity little better than drunk, he knows neither God, nor himſelf, nor the world, he knows it not to be a vain world: he knows not himſelf to be vanity, to be an empty creature, except he conſiſt in God, and make his peace with him; he knows not God to be ſuch a holy God, and ſuch an angry God for ſin: but when affliction comes, and withdraws, and ſtrips him of thoſe things that made him fierce againſt God, then he begins to know God, and to tremble at the judgments of God: when he begins to ſmart, he begins to know himſelf to be a mad man, and a fool, and a ſot: he did not know himſelf before in his jollity: but now he knows the world indeed as a vain world. Bleſſed be that affliction that makes us know a gracious and good God, and the creature to be a vain creature, and ourſelves, out of the favour of God, to be nothing. You ſee what afflictions will do.

God doth uſe to break men, as men uſe to break horſes, they ride them over hedge and ditch, and over plowed land, uneven grounds, and gall them with the ſpur, and with the bit, and all to make them tractable: and then afterwards they ride them gently, and meekly, and rather ſo than otherwiſe. So God is fain to carry his children over plowed lands, he is fain to break them in their wickedneſs, to bring their ways upon their heads, he is fain to gall them, and humble them every kind of way, that they may carry him, that he may bring their ſpirits under him, that he may lead them in the ways that lead to their own comfort.

Let us never murmur therefore at God's hand, but willingly yield at the firſt: what doth a ſtubborn horſe get, but the ſpur, and ſtripes? and what doth a man get that ſtands out, when God comes to humble him by affliction, and intends his good? nothing but more ſtripes. To come to the parts.

We are all as an unclean thing, &c.

Here firſt you ſee there is an humble confeſſion. I will not enlarge

enlarge myſelf in the point of humiliation, but ſpeak a little, becauſe this is the day of humiliation, the occaſion is for humiliation, all this is to bring us low, to humble us, to make us know ourſelves. Without humiliation Chriſt will never be ſweet unto us, and the benefit of health, &c. will never be precious to us. I mean by humiliation, when God humbles us, and we humble ourſelves, when we join with God, when God humbling of us, and our humbling of ourſelves go together, then mercy is ſweet, and favour and protection is ſweet; when God pours his judgements on others, and ſpares us.

Now humiliation, it is either real, or inward, or verbal.

Real humiliation indeed, that is, our humbling ourſelves by faſting, eſpecially when it is joined with reformation of our wicked ways, or elſe it is a mockery of God, as it is in Iſaiah lviii. "to hang down the head a while," and in the mean time to have a hard heart, to ſhut up our bowels to your brethren: but that is a real kind of humiliation when we think ourſelves unworthy of the creatures of meat or drink, of any refreſhing for this humiliation of faſting is a kind of profeſſion (though we ſpeak not ſo) that we are unworthy of theſe things. But all is nothing, without inward humiliation of the ſoul; verbal humiliation is in words (as we ſhall ſee after in confeſſion) and it muſt come from inward humiliation of ſpirit.

Therefore (conſidering it is here the firſt diſpoſition of God's people) let us labour to work upon ourſelves thoſe conſiderations that may make us humble. I will name a few.

Firſt, to bring ourſelves to the glaſs of the law; examine ourſelves how ſhort we have been of every commandment.

2. But eſpecially to bring ourſelves to the goſpel; we hope to be ſaved by Chriſt: and have we mourned for our ſins, "as one mourneth for his firſt-born?" Our ſins have wounded Chriſt. Have we preferred Chriſt in our thoughts above all the things in the world? have they all been dung to us? Have we had that bleſſed eſteem of the gracious promiſes of the goſpel and the prerogatives therein ſet forth, that they have been ſo precious to us, that we have undervalued all to them, as St. did? A baſe eſteem of the goſpel is a great ſin—"How ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great ſalvation?" Suppoſe we be not enemies to the miniſtry and to holineſs of life expreſſed in the goſpel, as many curſed creatures are; yet a baſe eſteem and undervaluing

dervaluing in our thoughts is a thing puniſhable: "How ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great ſalvation?" Have we walked worthy of the dignity we are called to by the goſpel? Have we carried ourſelves ſo in ſpiritual things, as to rule our baſe luſts? Have we been careful of private prayer, to offer ourſelves to God as prieſts? Are we not preſſed in St. Paul's Epiſtles, "to carry ourſelves worthy of our profeſſion," and have we done ſo? Let us examine our carriage, and ſee how proportionable it is to God's advancing of us in theſe glorious times of the goſpel, and this will bring us on our knees.

We are aſhamed of a little unkindneſs to men; but when we conſider how unkind we have been to God, who thought not his dear Son and heaven happineſs too much for us, who, beſides other favours, protects and clothes, and feeds us every day, and yet we have not been anſwerable. Theſe conſiderations ſhould humble us proportionable to our carriage to men. Can we be aſhamed to offer an unkindneſs to men, and are we not aſhamed, cannot we be abaſed with this that we have carried ourſelves ſo towards God? It comes from atheiſm and infidelity of heart, that either we believe not theſe things to be good, or elſe that we have not our part or portion in them, could we ever be ſo dead and dull hearted elſe?

3. Again, that we may be humbled, let us call to mind, now in this day of humiliation, our ſpecial ſins; we may ſoon know them; our conſciences and our enemies will upbraid us for them; and we are to loath to hear of them above all, either by the miniſtry or by our friends. We wiſh above all, that the preacher would not ſpeak of them, and we fret if he do; for our hearts run upon them above all. So let us ſearch our falſe hearts, which way they run: and now in the day of our abaſement, let us think what would lie heavieſt on our conſcience, if God ſhould take us now with ſickneſs or ſudden death; let us think with ourſelves what is the ſin that would afflict me moſt? that would ſtagger me moſt, that would ſhake my faith moſt; whether it be filthineſs or profaneneſs, or ſwearing or injuſtice, and whether have I made ſatisfaction or no? Let me examine, if God ſhould ſtrike me with his arrow now, what ſin would rob me of my comfort, and make me afraid to yield my ſoul to God. Now think of it, this is the way to be humbled: you may now bring yourſelves to conſider of that which at other times you will not give yourſelves leiſure to do. What are days

days of faſting for, but to give ourſelves leiſure, that we may not think of meat and drink and buſineſs? Theſe days ſhould be days of reſt, that we may think of that which concerns our ſouls: take the advantage when thou reſteth from thinking of other buſineſs, think with thine own ſoul what will lie heavieſt upon thy ſoul. This is required to humiliation: this real humiliation that is outward, it is a proteſtation of the inward; and verbal humiliation is but an expreſſion of what we do inwardly.

There are two things wondrous neceſſary, before the ſoul can be in the right frame it ſhould be in.

Firſt, the ſoul muſt apprehend deeply what diſtance it hath from God, what alienates it from God, before it can be wiſe: and it muſt be eſtranged from that, before ever it can come to couple and join with God. When the ſoul apprehends what ſeparates it from God, and conceives as it ſhould do of that, then it will be the readier to apprehend God, and then all duties will come off eaſily. Therefore let us firſt of all work upon our ſouls to be humbled, by all the helps that can be.

4. And to help it, conſider now at this time, how uncertain our life is—we know not who may be ſtricken next; and conſider what the dangerous iſſue is, if we humble not ourſelves here, before God humble us in our graves. Let us help humiliation by all that may be: For where this is, all will follow eaſily: a man will go out of himſelf to God, when he is abaſed in himſelf, and ſees no comfort in heaven or earth, but in God; that there is nothing to be ſtuck to in the world, but all is vanity; and he may be ſtripped of life, and of all theſe comforts ere long. When a man is abaſed, faith and obedience will come off eaſily. What is the reaſon that Chriſt is not reliſhed more, and that many fall off? They were never deeply humbled: according to the depth of humiliation, ſo is the growth of holineſs of life, and the height of faith. All graces riſe higher as the ſoul is more deeply humbled. The more we deſcend deeply in digging and rending up our hearts, the more the word of God ſinks into the good ground, that ſuffers the plough to rend it up, and cut off the weeds. The more deeply we are humbled, the more the fruits of God's word appear in our hearts and lives, the more fruitful is our converſation: all comes indeed upon the truth of our humiliation; and when that is not deep and true, all the reſt is ſhallow and counterfeit: there we ſhould work it upon our hearts.

And

5. Labour to be humble and low in all the powers of our ſouls; to have humble judgments, to think of ourſelves as God thinks of us. God thinks of us as ſinners: God and Chriſt think of us, that we are ſuch as muſt deny all in us before we be fit for heaven. Let us judge of ourſelves, as he that muſt be our judge doth, and will judge of us ere long. Labour to have low opinions of ourſelves, what we are in ourſelves, empty of all good, defiled with all ill.

And this will breed poverty of ſpirit in our judgments. Then let us labour for humility in our affections, to bring ourſelves more to God, to ſtoop to him in fear and reverence, and humility, in our obedience and converſation to God and to men, every way. Let humility ſpread itſelf over all the parts and powers of the ſoul and body, and over our whole lives. I cannot ſtand further upon that.

Now here is verbal humiliation, that is, by confeſſion, expreſſing our humiliation by our words, as the people of God do here by confeſſion, laying open our ſins that God may cover them; what we hide God will never cure: therefore we ſhould take heed, that now we are to deal with God, we lay open the bottom of our ſouls to him—let not the iron be in the wound. You know a ſurgeon can heal nothing, if the iron or poiſoned arrow ſtick there. If there be corruption in the ſtomach, it muſt up; if it be ill gotten goods, it will not digeſt, up it muſt all to God. For men, except there be ſcruples that a man cannot free his conſcience, there is no neceſſity, though great conveniency; but between God and the ſoul, open all by confeſſion, and give not over till thou haſt brought pardon to thy heart of that ſin thou haſt confeſſed. Every ſlight confeſſion is not enough, but it muſt be a reſolved downright confeſſion, without guile of ſpirit, as it is in Pſal xxxii. this is the courſe that David takes there; until he dealt roundly with his ſoul without guile, "his moiſture was as the drought of ſummer;" he was in ſome dangerous diſeaſe that could not be cured. And if we look to be preſerved from falling into ſickneſs, or if we be ſick, to be cured, we muſt begin the cure in our ſouls, lay open the wound to God—"I ſaid, I will confeſs my ſin," and thou forgaveſt me:" he begins with confeſſion. So all perſons that either fear or are under any judgment, let them begin with laying open their ſouls to God: when the ſoul is healed, he will heal the body preſently after; for he lays ſickneſs upon the body

body for the ſoul; and when the wound is healed, the plaiſter will fall off of itſelf; therefore, let us lay open our ſins by confeſſion, and ſhame our ſouls all that we can.

This is the way to give glory to God—let us join both together, our own eaſe, and glory to God. When we have laid open our ſouls to God, and laid as much againſt ourſelves as the devil could do that way; for let us think what the devil would lay to our charge at the hour of death and the day of judgement; he would lay hard to our charge this and that; let us accuſe ourſelves as he would, and as he will ere long. The more we accuſe and judge ourſelves, and ſet up a tribunal in our hearts, certainly there will follow an incredible eaſe. Jonah was caſt into the ſea, and there was eaſe in the ſhip. Achan was ſtoned, and the plague was ſtayed. Out with Jonah, out with Achan, and there will follow eaſe and quiet in the ſoul preſently; conſcience will receive wonderful eaſe. It muſt needs be ſo, for when God is honoured, conſcience is purified. God is honoured by confeſſion of ſin every way. It honours his omniſcience, that he is all-ſeeing, that he ſees our ſins, and ſearcheth the hearts, our ſecrets are not hid from him. It honours his power. What makes us confeſs our ſins, but that we are afraid of his power, leaſt he ſhould execute it? And what makes us confeſs our ſins, but that we know, there is "mercy with him that he may be feared? and that there is pardon for ſin; we would not confeſs our ſins elſe. With men, it is confeſs, and have execution; but with God, confeſs and have mercy; it is his own proteſtation. We would never lay open our ſins, but for mercy. So it honours God; and when he is honoured, he honours the ſoul with inward peace and tranquility. We can never have peace in our ſouls, till we have dealt roundly with our ſins, and favour them not a whit, till we have ripened our confeſſion to be a thorough confeſſion. What is the difference between a chriſtian and another man? another perſon ſlubbers over his ſins, God is merciful, &c. and he thinks, if he come to the congregation, and follow the miniſter, it will ſerve the turn. But a chriſtian knows that religion is another manner of matter, another kind of work than ſo: he muſt deal thoroughly and ſeriouſly, and lay open his ſin as the chief enemy in the world, and labour to raiſe all the hatred he can againſt it, and make it the object of his bitter diſpleaſure, as being that which hath done him more hurt than all the world beſides; and

ſo

ſo he confeſſeth it, with all the aggravation of hatred and envy that he can.

But to come more particularly to the confeſſion here ſpoken of, " We all are as an unclean thing," &c.

We all.

We ſee here holy men themſelves confeſs their ſins, and rank themſelves among ſinners in their confeſſions. So we learn hence this;

That we in our confeſſions (in our faſtings eſpecially) ought to rank ourſelves amongſt the reſt of ſinners, and not to exempt ourſelves from other ſinners. Perhaps we are not guilty of ſome ſins that they have been guilty of: God hath been merciful to us, and kept us in obedience in ſome things: but alas! there is none of us all but have had a hand in the ſins of the times; the beſt of all conditions are guilty of them; therefore we have cauſe to rank ourſelves among others, as he ſaith here, " we all are as an unclean thing:" and as Daniel, he makes a confeſſion of the ſins of all, we are all of us guilty.

How are we all guilty?

We are all guilty in this reſpect, we receive ſome taint and ſoil from the times we live in; either our zeal is weakened, we do not grieve ſo much for the ſins of the times, and who is not guilty in this reſpect? We do not grieve and lament as we ſhould: St. Paul tells the Corinthians, they ſhould have been ſorry and humbled; they were guilty of the ſin of the inceſtuous perſon, becauſe they were not humbled for it. We are thus far guilty, at leaſt the beſt of us, that we do not ſorrow for the common ſins. Alas how many ſins are there that every body may ſee in the times in all ranks? In paſtors, what unfaithfulneſs; and in governors, and places of juſtice; what crying of the poor and men oppreſſed; and in all ranks of people we ſee a general ſecurity, we ſee filthineſs, and hear oaths, " for which the land mourns," as Jeremiah ſaith, Jer. xxiii. Theſe and ſuch like ſins provoke God, and ſolicit the vengeance of God, and will have no nay till they have pulled down vengeance. Who hath been ſo much humbled for theſe ſins as he ought? Perhaps ourſelves are not perſonally guilty of them: but are they not our ſins, ſo far as we are not abaſed for them, and oppoſe them, and repreſs them as we ſhould in

in our places and ſtandings, whether we be miniſters or magiſtrates? Thus far we are guilty all, therefore the prophet might well ſay, "We all are as an unclean thing," &c.

Then again, there is a great ſympathy in the hearts of good men; they are full of pity and compaſſion, therefore they join themſelves with others, partly knowing that they are guilty in ſome degree with others; and partly becauſe they are members of the ſame body politick and eccleſiaſtical, they live in the ſame church and common-wealth, therefore all join their confeſſion together, "We all are as an unclean thing," &c.

Let us make this uſe of it, every one of us to be humbled; do not every one of us bring ſticks to the common fire? Do we not add ſomething to the common judgment? If there be two malefactors who have committed a treſpaſs, one of them is taken, and uſed in his kind, he is executed, will it not grieve the other? he will think, Was it not my caſe? I was a wretched ſinner as well as he. If there be divers traitors, and the king is merciful to one, and the other he executes, will it not grieve him that is ſpared, if he has any bowels or good nature? (beſides goodneſs in other kinds), will he not think it was my own caſe, there was no difference between me and them, only the mercy of the king. So the beſt of us may think, Have I not a corrupt nature; and, for the ſins of the times, am not I defiled with them? Others have been ſtricken, might not the ſame arrow have ſtricken me? Certainly this conſideration, that we bring ſomething to the public ſins, it will make us humbled for the public, as the church confeſſeth, "We are all as an unclean thing," &c.

To come to the particulars of the confeſſion.

We are all as an unclean thing.

Here is a confeſſion of their perſons—their perſons were tainted. We are all a tainted ſeed and generation by nature; what the wickedeſt is wholly, the beſt are in part; therefore it is no error that we ſhould ſay ſo and ſo of ourſelves in our confeſſions, as St. Paul ſaith of himſelf, "I am ſold under ſin," Rom. vii. one would wonder that he ſhould confeſs ſo. Alas! bleſſed man, he felt that in part which others in the ſtate of nature are wholly. So we are all filthy, the beſt, as they are not renewed, are as other men are.

Unclean.

It is a compariſon taken from the leproſy, or ſome other contagious diſeaſe; thoſe that were tainted of them were ſeparated from the congregation ſeven days, or ſome ſet time. So it is with ſin, eſpecially the ſins of this people; they had ſinned grievouſly, and were ſevered from their land, not ſeven days, but ſeventy years, the leproſy and filthineſs of their ſins was ſuch.

Indeed ſin, eſpecially the ſin of nature, it is a leproſy, contagious, peſtilential; and, as a leproſy, it ſpreads over all the parts and powers of body and ſoul. Take a man that is not changed, he hath a leprous eye, full of adultery, he hath a leprous uncircumciſed ear. Aſk him how he judgeth of diſcourſes and ſermons, he reliſheth nothing but that which is frothy and vain. Plain ſubſtantial ſolid diſcourſes either in hearing or reading, will not down with him. He hath a leprous judgment, his eyes, and ears, and tongue, are defiled and corrupt; he is vile and abominable in his ſpeech, he is uncircumciſed in all; all are unclean, all his powers are defiled by nature.

All the waſhings in the law did ſignify this, the corruption and defilement of our natures, which needs another waſhing, which they typified—a waſhing by the blood and ſpirit of Chriſt. Chriſt came by water and blood, both in juſtification and ſanctification. "There is a fountain opened, for Judah and Jeruſalem to waſh in." All thoſe waſhings ſhewed a defilement ſpiritual, that needed a ſpiritual waſhing. This ſin is leprous contagious ſin; therefore, by nature, we may cry as the leper, "unclean, unclean:" the beſt of us may take up that complaint as far as we are not renewed. A leprous man defiled the things that he touched; ſo it is with ſin—till it be forgiven, we defile every thing. A proud man, eſpecially when he is ſet out in his bravery, he thinks himſelf a jolly man, a brave creature; alas! he is a filthy creature, not only in himſelf, but in every thing he puts his hand unto; he taints and defiles every thing, even civil actions, he ſins in eating and drinking: not that they in the ſubſtance of them are ſins, but he ſtains every thing; for he forgets God in them, he forgets himſelf exceedingly, and he returns not thanks to God: ſo in moral and civil actions, much much more in religious, he defiles himſelf in every thing; he is defiled to all things, and are things are defiled

filed to him. This is our ſtate by nature, " We are all as an unclean thing."

Uſe.—This ſhould enforce the neceſſity of cleanſing ourſelves in the blood of Chriſt, that is, in the death of Chriſt, who hath ſatisfied the juſtice of God. Our natures are ſo full in regard of the guilt and ſtain, that the blood of God-man, that is, the ſatisfactory death of God-man was neceſſary to breed reconciliation and atonement between God and us. " And the blood of Chriſt, who, by the eternal ſpirit offered himſelf, muſt purge our conſciences," &c.: our conſciences will not otherwiſe be pacified and cleanſed in regard of guilt, but will cry ſtill, much leſs will God be appeaſed. Neither God nor conſcience will be pacified, but by the blood of him who, by the eternal ſpirit, offered up himſelf, and then it will, in regard of the guilt and ſtain, then God and conſcience will be appeaſed. Therefore, in Zech. xiii. " There is a fountain opened for Judah and Jeruſalem to waſh in." And, " The blood of Chriſt cleanſeth from all ſin." Blood is of a defiling nature; but the blood of Chriſt cleanſeth, becauſe it is a ſatisfactory blood: he died, and was a ſacrifice, as a public perſon, for us all.

Then again, conſidering that we are all defiled, beſides this cleanſing from the guilt of ſin, let us get our natures cleanſed by the ſpirit of Chriſt more and more; we are all defiled.

Uſe 2.—And take heed of thoſe that are defiled, take heed of ſinners. Who would willingly ly with a leprous perſon? yet notwithſtanding for matter of marriage, and intimate ſociety, there is a little conſcience made; men converſe with leprous company, they join in the moſt intimate ſociety with thoſe that are leprous in their judgments. The life of nature we know, and are careful to avoid what may impair it; but it is a ſign we have not the life of God begun in us, becauſe we do not value it; if we had, we would be more careful to preſerve it, and to take heed of contagious company. Who would go to the peſt-houſe, or to one that hath " Lord have mercy upon us" on the door? none but a madman—he might do ſo; and ſurely thoſe that join with ſwearers, and drunkards, and filthy perſons, and go to filthy places and houſes, as many do, (more ſhame for them); they think they have no ſouls, nor no account to make; they go to theſe places and infect themſelves. It is a ſign they have no life of grace, all companies are alike to them.

Is this ſtrength of grace? No, they have no life of grace, they have nothing to loſe; for, if they had the life of grace, they would preſerve it better.

Sin is a filthy thing, more filthy than the leproſy, nay, than the plague itſelf, for the plague or leproſy makes but the body loathſome, but the ſin that we cheriſh and are loth to hear of, makes the ſoul loathſome. The one makes unfit for the company of men, but the other, ſin, and corruption, and luſts, unfit us for the kingdom of God, for heaven, for life or death, therefore it is worſe. The leproſy of the body makes a man not a whit odious to God, but the leproſy of the ſoul makes us hateful to him. We may have more intimate communion with God in the plague, than out of the plague, becauſe God ſupplies the want of outward comforts, but in ſin we can have no comfortable communion and ſociety with God; therefore this plague of the ſoul is many ways worſe than the peſtilence. But we want faith; God hath not opened our eyes to ſee that which we ſhall ſee and know ere long, and it is happy if we conſider it in time.

To conclude this point, concerning the corruption of nature, take David's courſe, Pſal. li. when ſinful actions come from us, or unſavoury words, or beaſtly thoughts, or unchaſte and noiſome deſires that grieve the ſpirit of God, let us go to the fountain, Alas! my nature is leprous as far as it is not purged, "I was conceived in ſin, my mother brought me forth in iniquity." The more we take occaſion every day to ſee and obſerve the corruption of our nature, the leſs it is; and we cannot better take occaſion, than upon every actual ſin to run to the fountain, the puddle from whence all comes, and be more humbled for that, than for particular ſins. It is a miſtake in men, they are aſhamed of an action of injuſtice, &c. but they ſhould go to their nature, and think, I have a falſe unclean nature, whereby I am ready to commit a thouſand ſuch if God ſhould let me alone, I have the ſpawn of all ſin, as far as the ſpirit hath not ſubdued it. It is a defect of judgment to be more humbled for particular ſins; nature is more tainted than any action; that ſowing, breeding ſin, (as the Apoſtle ſaith) it is worſe than the action, it breeds the reſt. So much for that, they confeſs here, "We are all as an unclean thing," in ourſelves.

But what comes from us?

That which aggravates to the utmoſt a ſinful ſtate.

All

All our righteouſneſs is as filthy rags.

He doth not ſay we have filthy actions, but our beſt actions are ſtained, and not one, but all. Mark how ſtrong the place is, "We all," the people of God, he includes all, as Daniel ſaith, "I confeſs my ſins, and the ſins of my people;" and there is no man in the church but might have this confeſſion in his mouth, "We," the people of God, and "all we," in all our actions, "All our righteouſneſs," &c. ſo all the actions of all the righteous, the beſt actions of the beſt men, and all the beſt actions of the beſt men are defiled and ſtained, it is as great an aggravation as may be.

Some would have it to intend the legal righteouſneſs, yet notwithſtanding it is true of all; and when we now humble ourſelves, it is good to think of all; ſo we may ſay, "all our righteouſneſs," whatſoever comes from us, it is ſtained and defiled. As for their legal performances, there is no queſtion of them, for alas! they truſted too much to them, in Iſa. i. and Iſa. laſt, they thought God was beholden to them for them, "Away with them, away with your new moons," &c. they were abominable to God as "the cutting off a dog's neck," as it is, Iſa. the laſt: ſo all their righteouſneſs, their ceremonial performances, were abominable.

But I ſay, we may raiſe it higher; it is not only true of them, but in greater matters, in our beſt moral performances, they are all as tainted rags.

Object.—How can this be? It is ſtrange it ſhould be ſo, the papiſts cry out here that we diſcourage men from good works; if all our righteouſneſs be as filthy rags, why ſhould we perform good works?

Anſ.—Suppoſe a man be ſick, all the meat he eats ſtrengthens his ſickneſs, ſhall he therefore not eat at all? Yes, he muſt eat ſomewhat, there is nature in him to ſtrengthen as well as his diſeaſe. Thy beſt performances are ſtained, wilt thou do none therefore? yes, though they be ſtained, yet there is ſome goodneſs in them; thou mayeſt honour God, and do good to others: beſides the ill, there is good, there is gold in the ore; there is ſome good in every good action; nay there is ſo much good as that God pardons the ill, and accepts the good. So though our good actions be ill, yet for their kind and matter and ſtuff they are good, they are commanded of God: for their original and

ſpring they are wrought by the ſpirit of God: for the perſon, the workman, it is one in the ſtate of grace, and for acceptance God rewards them. But it is another thing when we come before God to humble ourſelves, then we muſt ſee what ſtains and ſins are in them. There is no good action ſo good, but there are wants and weakneſſes, and ſtains and blemiſhes in it, as it comes from us. The ſpirit of God indeed is effectual to ſtir us up to good actions, but we hinder the work of the Holy Ghoſt, and do not do them ſo thoroughly as we ſhould; therefore beſides our wants and weakneſſes, there is a tainting, either we have falſe aims, they are not ſo direct, or our reſolutions are not ſo ſtrong; falſe aims creep in for a while, though we do not allow them; and there are ſome coolers of our devotion, our love is cold, our hatred of ſin is not ſo ſtrong, our prayers are not ſo fervent, our actions are not ſo carried without interruption, but are hindered with many by-thoughts; who cannot complain of theſe things? Who is not brought upon his knees for the weakneſs of his beſt actions? Nay, I ſay more, a chriſtian is more humbled for the imperfections and ſtains of his beſt actions, than a civil carnal perſon is for his outward enormities; for he turns over all his outward delinquencies, and makes the matter but a trick of youth, when a poor chriſtian is abaſed for his dullneſs and deadneſs, and coldneſs; for falſe aims that creep into his actions, for interruptions in his duties, that his thoughts will not ſuffer him to ſerve God with that intention that he would, but puts him off with motions and ſuggeſtions, and temptations in his beſt performances: this abaſeth him more, than outward groſs ſins do a carnal perſon. When we deal with God, our righteouſneſs is as menſtruous clothes.

Know this for a ground, that there is a double principle in a Chriſtian in all things that he doth; there is fleſh and ſpirit; and theſe two iſſue out in whatſoever comes from him. In his good works there is fleſh as well as ſpirit, in his thoughts and deſires, in his prayer, his prayer itſelf ſtands in contraries. So every thing that comes from him, it is tainted with that which is contrary; the fleſh oppoſeth and hinders the work of the ſpirit, and ſo it ſtains our good works. Therefore contraries are true of a Chriſtian, which ſeem ſtrange to another man. A chriſtian at the ſame time is deformed and well-favoured, "he is black and comely." "I am black, but yet well-favoured," ſaith the ſpouſe, black in regard of ſin, but well-favoured in regard of the ſpirit of God, and the acceptation of Chriſt. He is a ſaint and

a

a ſinner: a ſinner in reſpect that ſin hath ſpread over all parts, and a ſaint in reſpect of Chriſt's acceptance, "my love and my dove." Chriſt makes love to his church, as if ſhe had no defilement: but he looks on her better part, he looks on her as ſhe is in his love, and as he means to bring her after. But the church looking upon herſelf as ſhe is in herſelf, ſhe is much abaſed: the ground of it is the imperfection of ſanctification in this world. The beſt of our works are as menſtruous clothes. When we think of the corruption of the beſt things as they come from us, when we come to humble ourſelves before God, we muſt down with proud ſtyles and pharliſaical thoughts, although there is ſomewhat that is good, yet let us think of all the ill that may abaſe us.

There is a ſeaſon for every thing. When we are tempted to be overcome by ſatan, then think of the good, as Job when he was tempted, "I have done this and this, you cannot take away mine innocency." In falſe temptations from the world and ſatan, then ſtand upon our innocency. But when we humble ourſelves before God, "Alas! I am duſt and aſhes, I abhor myſelf," as Job and Abraham ſaid. Lay all proud apprehenſions of ourſelves aſide, and all good works, eſpecially in one reſpect, in matter of juſtification—"all is dung in compariſon of Chriſt." All muſt be ſold for the pearl, the righteouſneſs of Chriſt. There is no reckoning muſt be had of good works, by way of merit in juſtification, and our title to heaven. What gives us a title to heaven, and frees us from hell? The death of Chriſt, the obedience and ſatisfaction of Chriſt. God by it hath redeemed us perfectly without any thing in ourſelves, and accepts us to life everlaſting only by the righteouſneſs of Chriſt; therefore it is called God's righteouſneſs, becauſe it was done by Chriſt, it was wrought by God. Our righteouſneſs is as menſtruous cloth, it is ſpotted and ſtained and defiled; it will not do the deed, it will not ſatisfy conſcience, much leſs the exact piercing judgment of God: that is the righteouſneſs that muſt ſtay our ſouls in life and death; and we muſt oppoſe it to all temptations, as a ſatisfying thing that will ſet down conſcience to be quiet, it muſt be the righteouſneſs of God-man, nothing elſe will do it. "All our righteouſneſs is as filthy rags," that is the confeſſion of their ſinful actions.

The next thing he confeſſeth is ſenſeleſſneſs. "There is none that calls upon thy name, that ſtirreth up himſelf to take hold

of thee." There are other words between, concerning the complaint of their miſerable eſtate; but I will handle thoſe that concern their ſins firſt.

There is none that calls upon thy name.

In a word, he means that none worſhipped him: becauſe prayer is put for the whole worſhip of God, as indeed it may well be put for the whole, for it exerciſeth all the graces of the ſpirit. What one grace is not ſet on work in prayer? (it is put for all the inward worſhip of God). If it be faith, prayer is the flame of faith; when there is faith in the heart, there will be prayer in the mouth. The knowledge of God—prayer is grounded upon a promiſe; ſo it comes from that part of ſpiritual worſhip. Hope—hope makes a man pray; no man would pour out his ſupplications but to him that he hath hope in. And, for love, God's love and mercy draws us into his preſence, and joy and delight in the preſence of God, draws us to pray. We give God the honour of all his attributes in prayer; of his truth, of his goodneſs, of his mercy, of his preſence everywhere, &c. So it ſets all graces to work, and gives God the honour of all. It is the worſhip of God every way; for though it be an outward verbal worſhip of itſelf, yet it expreſſeth the worſhip of God inward—it gives God the honour of all.

Therefore thoſe that pray not, what kind of perſons are they? Wretched perſons. The ſickneſs is now among us: If a man ſhould aſk now, what family is likelieſt to have the vengeance of God on it? though I ſpeak not to cenſure thoſe that have it, but I ſpeak in God's ordinary courſe; ſurely thoſe that do not exerciſe the duty of prayer. "Pour out thy wrath on thoſe that call not upon thy name." Thoſe families that call not upon God humbly morning and evening, or that perſon that doth not morning and evening reverently call upon God, they are fit objects for the vengeance of God, for the plague or the like: "Pour out thy wrath on the families and perſons that call not upon thy name;" inſinuating, that the Lord will ſpare us, if we do call upon his name, and humble ourſelves. If thou wilt needs pour out thy vengeance, let it be on them that have not grace humbly to call on thy name. Let us make conſcience of this duty, except we will prove atheiſts, and lie open to all the vengeance of God.

There

There is none that ſtirreth up himſelf to take hold on thee.

He repreſents God to us as a great perſon, that would beſtow ſome benefit, and is ready to turn away himſelf, yet none lays hold of him, or deſires him to ſtay: ſo, ſaith he, there is none that lays hold on God to keep him, that he ſhould not go away. Therefore when he ſaith, "None calls upon thy name, nor ſtirs up himſelf to take hold on thee," he means there are none that pray earneſtly. Incenſe was to be burnt, or elſe it caſt no ſweet ſmell; our prayers muſt have fire and zeal in them, our prayers muſt be cries that muſt pierce heaven—"Out of the deep have I cried unto thee, Lord." We muſt ſtir up ourſelves; we muſt waken ourſelves to waken God: indeed before we can waken God, we muſt waken ourſelves.

There is none that ſtirreth up himſelf to take hold of thee.

Inſinuating, that if we would lay hold on God, he will be ſtayed. To ſpeak a little more particularly of this. God is ſo gracious, that he will be ſtayed even by prayer. The way to ſtay God in his judgements, and to lay hold of him, and to keep him among us, is by prayer. Let us take notice now of the hand of God upon us. What is the means to ſtop his hand that he come not among us with his public judgements? It is prayer. The way to ſtop God, and the angel that hath his ſword now drawn over our heads, it is prayer. God ſo condeſcends that he will be ſtopt by prayer; as we ſee in Exod. xiii. he ſaith to Moſes, "let me alone." Moſes prayed and alledged arguments to God, that he ſhould not confound his people; "Let me alone," ſaith he, inſinuating that prayer binds God's hands. So powerful is prayer, that it binds the Almighty; it makes the omnipotent in ſome ſort impotent; he cannot do what he would, he cannot exerciſe his wrath, prayer binds him.—When a company of chriſtians lay hold on him by prayer, he cannot do what he threateneth. The only way to lay hold on God is by prayer. In Ezek. xxii. there is a complaint that "none ſtood in the gap;" inſinuating, that if any ſtood in the gap when the vengeance of God was coming abroad, they might have prevented the wrath. The way to ſtand in the gap, and to keep God, is to pray, and to pray heartily.

Now, that God may be held by our prayers, they muſt be ſtrong prayers; every prayer will not hold God. They muſt be ſtrong prayers that muſt bind ſuch a Sampſon that hath his ſtrength,

ſtrength. Therefore there muſt be a ſtirring up of ourſelves; he ſaith here, "There is none that ſtirreth up himſelf to take hold of thee." So it is the duty of chriſtians to ſtir up themſelves in theſe times.

Queſt.—How ſhall we ſtir up ourſelves?

Anſw.—Firſt, by conſidering the danger we are in. Danger felt or feared, it will make a man lay hold. When a child feels the ſmart of the rod, he lays hold upon his father or mother's hand—ſtrike no more. When the children of God feel the ſmart of his judgments, then they cry, O, no more. The cry of the child prevails with the mother, though often times it cannot ſpeak: ſo, when in the ſenſe of ſin and miſery, we cry to God, we move his bowels with crying. There is no queſtion but the ſerious apprehenſion of danger felt, doth awaken the ſoul and ſtir it up. It is ſo alſo in danger feared; a danger feared with belief, will work as if it were preſent: for a man that hath a ſpirit of faith will ſee, that unleſs God be appeaſed with good courſes, he will puniſh as ſurely as if the judgement were upon him. Faith makes things preſent, both good and ill; and it makes a man ſenſible of things that are not yet upon him. This is the difference between a chriſtian and another man; another man "puts the evil day far off from him:" but a believing chriſtian, by a ſpirit of faith, ſees God (except he be turned away by hearty and humble repentance) ready to ſeize upon him; and ſo he walks humbly in all his courſes. So that danger felt or feared by a ſpirit of faith, awakens and ſtirs up the ſoul to lay hold on God.

Therefore in ſpiritual dangers, we ſhould eſpecially waken our ſouls, to ſee in what need we ſtand of Chriſt, and the pardoning mercy of God in Chriſt, that we may waken him, and give him no reſt till we find peace in our conſciences.

2. Then again, that we may ſtir up ourſelves withal, is the meditation of the neceſſity and excellency of grace, and of the good things we beg: the ſerious conſideration of that will make us ſtir up ourſelves to lay hold on God, and give him no reſt till we have it. When a man thinks the "loving-kindneſs of God is better than life," and if I have not that, my life is nothing to me, it is not only better than corn, wine, and oil, but than life itſelf, than any thing in the world. If one ſhould offer ſuch a man this, a heart patiently to bear ill, and large to do good,

good, and ſtrength againſt temptations, he would rather have this gracious diſpoſition than any thing in the world; he would rather have the pardon of ſin, with the ſenſe of God's favour, than any thing in the world. This will ſtir up a man, as we ſee in David, Pſal. li. "Mercy, mercy," it binds God, and lays hold on him, together with pardoning mercy, to have a heart enlarged with ſpiritual joy. There is nothing ſpiritual, but it is ſo excellent, that if we had the eyes of our ſpirits awakened to ſee them, we ſhould bind God, and lay hold of him, he ſhould not go further till he had ſhined on us.

3. Therefore, let us offer violence to God this way, never give him reſt till we obtain. You ſee when the two diſciples were going to Emmaus, Chriſt made as though he would have gone further, but they compelled him. Now there is a ſemblance as if God threatened war, and would take away the goſpel, there are dangers abroad. When God makes ſuch a ſemblance, let us lay hold on him, let him go no further. Lord, night approacheth, and affliction approacheth. Lord ſtay, thou ſhalt go no further—let us ſtop God with importunity. The conſideration of danger, and the neceſſity and excellency of the things we beg, will make us lay hold on God.

There is an hypocriſy among men, among a company of formaliſts, that are the bane of the times, that God will throw out; they are as ill as profane perſons in his noſtrils: they think that all devotion is in proſtrating themſelves, (which is good, and more than profane men will do), and yielding a dead ſacrifice to God; they will come and hear, and yield the outward act, in outward humiliation. Is this to rouſe thyſelf? outward things are never current, but when they expreſs outwardly the inward truth. Therefore take another courſe; God cares not for the dead empty carcaſe thou bringeſt him. Work upon thine own heart, by meditation of the danger thou art in, and of the excellency of the things thou art to beg, and meditate of the majeſty of God, whom thou appeareſt before, of his goodneſs and truth, &c. affect thy heart deeply with theſe apprehenſions, let theſe ſerious thoughts draw outward expreſſions of humiliation; and then it is excellent, when the outward expreſſion follows the inward impreſſion, when there is ſomewhat inward, that ſhews itſelf outward, when we ſtir up ourſelves, and not to think that all devotion conſiſts in a comely outward carriage, which is commendable in itſelf; but becauſe men uſually reſt in

it,

it, it is prejudicial to their ſouls good. We muſt offer a reaſonable ſacrifice to God, we muſt love him in our hearts; we muſt work upon our hearts, and carry ourſelves ſo in our inward man as that we may ſtir up our whole man, and awaken our ſouls, "Praiſe the Lord, O my ſoul, and all that is within me praiſe his holy name." We ſhould ſtir up ourſelves by ſpeaking to our own ſouls, that we may waken and take hold of God.

4. This again will help it; a man ſhould never come to pray, but he ſhould have an anſwer before he hath done, either at that time or another: never give over till thou haſt an anſwer; this will make us ſtir up ourſelves indeed. How do you know a prayer from a formal lip-labour? A man that prays conſcionably, marks what he doth, and expects a return, as a man that ſoweth his ſeed. He that doth a thing with a hope of iſſue will do it thoroughly, therefore never pray to perform an empty duty to God; but mark what you pray for, if it be forgiveneſs of ſins, or for grace, or protection, &c. and do it with that earneſtneſs, that you may hope for an iſſue anſwerable; and this going about it will make us do it to purpoſe. Do we think to ſerve God with the deed done? God hath appointed prayer for our good, and to convey bleſſings to us. Let us pray ſo as we may expect a bleſſing by it. Now that prayer which expects a bleſſing to be conveyed, it will be a prayer to purpoſe, it will make a man ſtir up himſelf.

There is none that ſtirreth up himſelf to take hold on thee.

The complaint of this holy man of God may be taken up at this time by many of us now. How few are thoſe that rouſe and ſtir up themſelves, but put off God with an empty compliment? Nay, in theſe times of danger, have ye not a company of idle perſons that will not vouchſafe to hear the word, nor to come and humble themſelves, but walk and talk offenſively, as if they would dare God; or, if they come here, they come not with a reſolution to hear the iſſue of their prayers, to rouſe themſelves up to lay hold on God. Becauſe, as there is a great deal of atheiſm in regard of God, ſo there is much dead fleſh in regard of men. Who is ſo piteous of our brethren round about as he ought? We had need to ſtir up ourſelves, the danger is preſent; we are beſet round about, yet who is ſtirred up to earneſt prayer? we want bowels of compaſſion. Thoſe that have hearts compaſſionate, it is a ſign that God intends good to them; but of the moſt we may take up this complaint,

complaint, we are dead-hearted in regard of our ſins againſt God, and in regard of the contagion among us. A man may ſee it by men's diſcourſes. There is enquiry how the ſickneſs ſpreads, and how many dies? but men do not labour with God to make their accounts even with him; nor are we compaſſionate to men, for that would be a means to ſtir and to rouſe us up to lay hold of God, to ſtay his hand out of love, and pity, and compaſſion to our brethren, who are our fleſh, though it ſhould never ſeize on us. I ſay, I fear this complaint is too juſtly on many of us. I beſeech you let us labour to amend it, as we tender our own ſalvation, (perhaps that which we do not regard ſo much, we ſhall ere long, but then), as we tender the health of our bodies, which we prefer before our ſouls, let us humble ourſelves more than ordinary now.

Some devils are not driven out but by prayer and faſting; ſo, ſome judgments will not away without prayer and faſting, not only public, but private faſting and prayer. Sometimes there muſt be more than ordinary humiliation for ſome ſins; for ſome kind of temptations there muſt be prayer and faſting; for ſome maladies prayer and faſting, and more than ordinary ſtirring up of ourſelves to lay hold upon God. God will not be held with ordinary humiliation—that will not do it; but there muſt be a reſolution againſt, and a hatred of all ſin, and to pleaſe God in all things. We muſt do it with extraordinary humiliation now, becauſe the judgement is extraordinary. There is ordinary humiliation, and extraordinary; as there are ordinary feaſts, and extraordinary, ſo there is ordinary humiliation for daily treſpaſſes; but in extraordinary judgments, extraordinary faſting and humiliation. As there is ordinary waſhing daily, but there is waſhing and ſcouring at ſometimes; God calls for extraordinary humiliation now, not only prayers, but ſtirring and rouſing up of ourſelves. We ſhould apprehend the danger as ſeizing on ourſelves; this night it may ſeize upon us, for aught we know. It ſhould affect us, and make us ſtir up ourſelves. This is the way to hold God by prayer; and, if we hold him, he will hold the deſtroying angel, he hath all creatures at his command. Thus you ſee how we ſhould confeſs the ſins of our perſons, the ſins of our good actions, our want of calling upon God—"There is none that calleth upon thy name, that ſtirreth up himſelf to take hold of thee." Thus far proceed the branches of their ſinful diſpoſition in thoſe times.

Now he complains likewiſe of the judgments of God.

We

We all fade as a leaf; our iniquities, as the wind, have taken us away; thou haſt hid thy face, and we are conſumed becauſe of our iniquities.

The complaint hath theſe four branches; a little of each.

We all fade as a leaf.

Wicked men are as leaves, and worſe, they are as chaff. Godly men, becauſe they have a conſiſtence, and are rooted in Chriſt, and ſet in a good ſoil, they are trees of righteouſneſs. But godly men, in the ſtate of their nature, and in regard of this life, they are as leaves: wicked men are as leaves every way, and as chaff, which the wind bloweth away, as we ſhall ſee afterwards.

We all fade as a leaf.

1. He means, in regard of ceremonial performances, that were without vigour and ſpirit of true devotion. There was no ſpirit in their legal performances, they were dead empty things; therefore, when judgment came, they were as leaves. So an idle careleſs hearer, when judgment comes, all is as leaves; when conſcience nips him, (as his atheiſtical heart will do ere long), then he is as a leaf, all fades away. The Jews, when they were in trouble, all their legal performances faded, they were all as a leaf. 2. So is it true, in regard of mortality, the vanity of health and ſtrength; we all as a leaf fade away, when God's judgments come to nip us. Men are as leaves, as the leaves in autumn fall, and there is a new generation in the ſpring; and then they fall away, and a new generation comes again. So it is with men; ſome are blown off, and ſome come on again. "We all fade as a leaf," not to be large on the point At this time we are all as leaves. In this city now, there is a kind of wind that nips a world of men, many hundreds in the head. It is an autumn wind that nips the leaves; our autumn wind with us, is before the time, a kind of autumn wind in the ſpring, or ſummer, that nips the leaves, and takes away the vigour of health.

And ſo, as I ſaid, for all idle performances, that have not a foundation in ſubſtantial piety, they are all as leaves, when trouble of conſcience comes, they are as Adam's fig-leaves: when God comes to ſearch and examine, they all fall off, both in reſpect of our performances, and in reſpect of our lives; we are all

all as leaves when God comes in judgment—this is one part of the complaint. "We are as leaves." The like we have of Moſes, the man of God, Pſal. xc. when God blows upon us with the wind of his diſpleaſure, we fall off as leaves.

Then, another expreſſion is,

Our iniquities, as the wind, have taken us away.

As chaff, or things that have no ſolidity in them, are blown away with a puff of wind, ſo it is with man, if he be not a chriſtian ſet into, and gathered unto Chriſt. By the fall, we all fell from God, and were ſcattered from him. Sin blew the angels out of heaven, it blew Adam out of paradiſe; and now Chriſt, the ſecond Adam, gathers us to him again, by his word and ſpirit, and ſo we have a ſolid and eternal being in him. But out of Chriſt, our iniquities, as a wind, and God's judgments, blow us all away firſt or laſt. Wicked men ſettle on their dregs a great while; but when God's judgment comes, it blows them in this world to this part and that part oftimes, when it pleaſeth him to exerciſe his outward judgment; but if he does not blow them away here, he will give them a blaſt that will ſet them to hell their centre. Out of Chriſt there is no ſolidity, no conſiſtence or being for any man. Therefore when God's judgment comes, it blows them away in this world, and at the hour of death, ſends them to hell—this is the ſtate of all. "Our iniquities, like the wind, take us away;" he means here, they were blown out of Judea to Babylon. It was a ſtrong blaſt that blew them out of their own country.

May not we ſay, Our iniquities have blown us away?—What hath blown us from our callings and employments? Is it not the peſtilence? and what brings that? Is it not our iniquities? So that we may all complain of this, "Our iniquities have blown us away."

We ſee here, he lays the blame upon their iniquities; did not the Babylonians carry them away? Alas! they were but God's inſtruments. God was diſpleaſed with their ſins, and his wrath blew them away. So you may ſee here, the child of God, in all his judgments, looks to his ſins; he juſtifies God, he murmurs not, and ſays this and that; no, but it was my ſins. "We have ſinned againſt the Lord," Micah vii. "I will bear the wrath of the Lord, becauſe I have ſinned againſt him," and

Lament.

Lament. iii. "Man ſuffers for his ſins;" and every one of us may ſay, "it is our iniquities have taken us away." A gracious heart juſtifies God and condemns itſelf The children of God may complain ſometimes of God's hand, but they will never cenſure God's hand; they juſtify God always, though they may complain of the bitterneſs of his hand. Here they complain of the bitterneſs of the judgement, they were blown into another country, into captivity—they do not complain of God. God will have us complain; ſo we muſt juſtify him and condemn ourſelves. "Juſt are thy judgments."

An hypocrite thinks God is beholden to him for his outward performances; and when judgments befal him, he frets and cenſures God: either he thinks there is no God, or he frets and fumes againſt God; he is diſcontented: but a chriſtian juſtifies God, and condemns himſelf. "Our iniquities have blown us away, our ſins keep good things from us."

Uſe.—Therefore let us now lay the blame where it is. Search out our ſins perſonal and particular, and complain of them, they have a hand in this plague. God is no tyrant; he delights not to confound his creatures; but ſin makes him out of love with his creatures, the workmanſhip of his own hands, it is our ſins. Therefore let us lament the ſins of the times; ſo far we may without hypocriſy, and ought to take to heart, and mourn for the ſins of the times, that we hear by others, and ſee ourſelves, and mourn for our own hearts that we cannot mourn. We muſt mourn for the ſins of the times, as Daniel and Nehemiah, and all the bleſſed men of God have done. It is not the plague that hurt us, that is but God's meſſenger. Sin doth us more harm than all the devils in hell, and all the plagues in the world; it is not outward evils we need to fear; let us fear ſin, and lay hold on God, he is the Lord of hoſts, he hath all the creatures at his command: let us get ſin away that doth us all the miſchief; it is that which makes ſtrife between God and us, and then God makes a controverſy between us and the creatures—it is our ſins.

And that is the reaſon of the neceſſity of humiliation for our ſins, becauſe ſin breeds a ſeparation between God and us, and between the creatures and us. When God is offended, the creatures are infected. Let us ſee our ſins; by them we infect the air, by our vain ſpeeches and oaths, and our filthineſs. Our ſins infect the air, and that breeds infections in our bodies. Our

ſins

ſins cry; they have a voice to cry to God, if our prayers do not out-cry them. Therefore let us cry to God to hear the cry of our prayers, and not of our ſins. How many voices have crying ſins! There is the voice of the people oppreſſed, the voice of filthineſs, &c. Sins clamour in God's ears, they clamour for wages due, "and the wages of ſin is death." Sin cries, though it ſay nothing in words; it cries in God's ears, and it will not reſt till he hath poured out his vengeance. The filthineſs and oaths, and atheiſm and profaneneſs, the ſuffering of the diſhonour of his name; theſe ſins of the times are thoſe that pull miſeries upon us—"Our iniquities have taken us away as the wind."

Sin makes God hide his face from us, and then "we are conſumed, becauſe of our iniquities." "We melt away in the hand of our iniquities," as the word is. Indeed ſin is a cruel tyrant; when God leaves us in the hand of our ſins, he leaves us in a cruel hand. Chriſt came to redeem us from our ſins; our ſins are they that torment us: it is very ſignificant in the original.

For thou haſt hid thy face from us, and we are conſumed becauſe of our iniquities.

"We are melted," we melt away as wax before the fire, as ſnow before the ſun, "becauſe of our iniquities," when God gives up men to be handled as their own ſins will handle them. Nations melt before the hands of ſin, and kings and kingdoms and all. Let God give up men to delight in ſin, kingdoms, or perſons, they melt and moulder away in the hand of their ſins.

But to ſpeak a little more of the next words.

Thou haſt hid thy face from us.

That is, thou haſt hid thy comfort from us. God hath a double face, a face that ſhines on our ſouls in peace, and joy, and comfort, when he ſaith to the ſoul, "I am thy ſalvation:" and his face that ſhines on the outward eſtate, that keeps miſery, and ſickneſs, and danger from us, and beſtows good things on us. And God takes away his face from us in regard of the inward man, when he gives us no peace, but leaves us to ſpiritual deſertion. In regard of the outward man, God hides his face, when he gives us up to peſtilence and war, and ſickneſs and miſeries in this life, when he gives us up to outward deſertion.

Sometimes God ſhines on wicked men in outward things, but he hides his face as to peace of conſcience: and ſometimes God's children have his face ſhining on their conſcience, but he hides his face in reſpect of outward things, ſometimes he ſhines in neither of both: at this time he neither ſhined on theſe bleſſed men in outward favours, for they were in captivity, nor in the ſenſe of his love and favour, for they were in deſolation, and eclipſed every way.

The face of God is as the ſun to the creatures: when the ſun hides his face, what is there but darkneſs and night? What makes the night, but the abſence of the ſun? What makes winter, but the abſence of the ſun? when he grows low, and cannot heat the earth. So, what makes winter in the ſoul, deadneſs, and darkneſs, and dullneſs in God's ſervice? The abſence of the face of God; God ſhines not on the ſoul. What makes night in the ſoul, when the ſoul is benighted with ignorance, that it cannot ſee itſelf, nor ſee the judgments of God? God ſhines not, the ſun of righteouſneſs ſhines not on that ſoul.

God is the ſun of the creature, he gives life to the creature. What will become of the creature when God neither ſhines outwardly nor inwardly on it? as at the day of judgment, he ſhall take away outward comforts, there ſhall be no outward ſhining; and all inward comforts, they ſhall have no hope, he ſhall altogether hide his face. When God, the fountain of all good, ſhall hide his face altogether from the creature, that is hell. The place where God ſhines not outwardly with comforts, nor inwardly, where there ſhall be hope of neither, but a place of horror and deſpair, that is hell; as the hell of this life is when God ſhines not on our ſouls.

Now, theſe holy men they complain, yet they pray, "Thou haſt hid thy face." Here is the conflict of faith, that ſees God hide his face, and yet will follow God; it ſees God ready to turn away himſelf, and yet it will lay hold of him, and have a glance at him: it will wreſtle with him, and not let him go without a bleſſing. So there be degrees of God's hiding of his face. Though God ſeem to hide his face, and withdraw outward comforts, and perhaps in ſome to withdraw his favour from their hearts inwardly; what ſhall they do, droop? No, wreſtle with God, as Jacob; ſee through the cloud that is between God and thy ſoul; break through by faith; and, with Job,

Job, ſay, "though he kill me, yet will I truſt in him." Let us ſtir up ourſelves to lay hold on God, when he ſeems to turn away his face; and imitate good Jacob, never give over ſeeking the face of God.

Queſt.—How ſhall we ſeek the face of God?

Anſ.—1. By prayer, for that brings us to the face of God, though he ſeems to hide his face, as Jeremiah complains, "Why art thou a ſtranger?" Jerem. xiv. and yet he prays. Seek him by prayer.

2. Seek him in his ordinances; hear the word of God, "thy face, Lord, will I ſeek." God invites you to ſeek his face now, by faſting and humiliation; ſeek his face in this ordinance; here is the bleſſed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt. Though outwardly God hide his face in ſome regards; yet when he offers outward liberties, refuſe them not: he offers his face to us in Chriſt; ſeek by prayer and other means, holy communion with him ſtill; and never leave ſeeking, till you have got a glance of him; and ſtir up yourſelves to lay hold on him, that he would ſhew his loving countenance upon you.

Thoſe that turn their backs on God's ordinances, and in rebellion to his commandments, who live in ſins againſt conſcience, can they wonder that he hides his face from them, when they turn their backs on him? Rebellious perſons that will not yield meekly to God's ordinances, and ſubmit to his commandments, do they wonder that God takes good things from them? When we ſin, we turn our backs upon God, and our face to the devil, and the world, and pleaſures. When men turn their faces to ſin, to pleaſures and vanity, and their backs on God, do they wonder that he ſuffers them to melt and pine away? Let us do as the flowers do, the marigold, &c. they turn themſelves to the ſun; let our ſouls do ſo, let us turn ourſelves to God in meditation and prayer, ſtriving and wreſtling with him; look to him, eye him in his ordinances and promiſes, and have communion with him all the ways we can. Let our ſouls open and ſhut with him; when he hides his face, let us droop, as the flowers do till the ſun come again. When the waters fall, the flowers droop and hang down their heads; when the ſun riſeth the next morning, up they go again, as if there had been never a ſhower. So, when we have not daily comfort of ſpirit, in peace of conſcience, let us never reſt ſeeking God's face in

his ordinances, and by prayer, and that will cheer a drooping ſoul, as the ſun-beams do the flagging flowers. Then you may know that God's face ſhines upon you in ſome meaſure, when he gives you means, and gives you hearts to uſe thoſe means, that whether you live or die, you are God's: this is a beam of that ſunſhine on the ſoul, when God vouchſafes joy and comfort. A little of this will baniſh all fears. If you have one glimpſe of his countenance, you ſhall not need to fear the plague, or war, or death: if he ſhine on you, one glance will take away all fear. Paul, when he was in the ſtocks, one beam of God's countenance made him ſing at midnight; "Let thy countenance ſhine on us, and we ſhall be ſafe," let what will become of us outwardly. If God ſhine not on us for outward favours, if he ſhine on our ſouls, and releaſe them from fears and guilt, and ſpeak peace unto them, he is their ſalvation, (and as he ſaith in the goſpel, "thy ſins are forgiven thee)," all will be well, whatſoever become of us. "Let us ſeek the Lord, while he may be found," hold him before he go, let him not depart: attend upon the means, never miſs good means of ſeeking his face, till we have got a ſweet anſwer from heaven, that he is our God.

Now follows the ſupplication.

But now, O Lord, thou art our Father, &c.

Here is a prayer which is a kind of holding God, by the relation of a Father; this is one way of ſtirring up our ſouls, to conſider the relation of a Father. It ſtirs up bowels, when a child is beaten by his Father—O ſtay, Father ſpare, it works upon the bowels. There is a world of rhetoric in this one word Father: why, Lord, thou art my Father, ſhall I be deſtroyed? Let us lay hold on God by this relation that he puts on himſelf, and he will not lay it aſide, though we be unworthy to be ſons. He doth not ſay thou art our Father, and we are thy ſons; becauſe he thought they were unworthy, (as the prodigal ſaith, "I am unworthy to be called thy ſon)," but inſtead of ſaying, We are thy ſons, he ſaith, "we are the clay, thou art the potter." Yet he is a Father continually; and though in Chriſt you cannot call him Father, yet you may by creation and initiation, being brought up in the church. Go to him with the encouragements you have, and caſt yourſelves upon him. There is a bond for you by creation, and there is his command; he bids

bids you call him Father, he is Father by creation. Look not upon this or that ſin, but go to him and call him Father, as you may call him; ſay, Thou art my Father, thou haſt given me a being in the church; wreſtle with him as you may, though as ſound Chriſtians, you cannot call him Father. Be weary of your courſes; are you willing to come under God's hands to be ſons? you are ſons by creation already: offer thyſelf to be of his family for the time to come, and God will give a ſweet report to thy ſoul Stand not out at the ſtaves end, "Thou art our Father," Lord. If you have a purpoſe to live in ſin, the devil is your father, and not God, you are of "your father, the devil;" but if we be willing to ſubmit, we may ſay, "Doubtleſs thou art our Father."

We are the clay, thou art the potter.

Here is a reſignation of themſelves to God, in this term, "thou art the potter, we are the clay." Indeed, we are but earthen veſſels the beſt of us, in regard of the bodily life we have; and we are at the liberty of God, to diſpoſe of us as he pleaſeth. So, before they come to put forth this prayer to God, they uſe this reſignation of themſelves into the hand of God: we are as clay in thy hands, Lord, diſpoſe of us as thou wilt: Let us remember this when we come to pray to God, uſe all means of that abaſement that can be; lay aſide all terms except abaſing terms; "we are the clay," and, as Job ſays, "I abhor myſelf in duſt and aſhes." So the ſaints have done in all times, "I am not worthy to be called thy ſon," and, "I am leſs than the leaſt of thy mercies." Let us lay aſide proud and lofty terms, and caſt down our crowns at the feet of Chriſt, as the ſaints in Revel. iv. caſt down all our excellencies; let us have no thought of outward excellencies, of beauty, or ſtrength, or riches, or high dignity: when we come to God, we muſt come with low thoughts to the high God—can the creature be too low in his preſence?

And then come with reſignation, "we are the clay, thou art the potter," do with as thou wilt; if thou daſh us in pieces as a potter's veſſel, thou mayeſt do it—that is the way to eſcape. That is well committed that is committed into God's hand. Some men ſhift by their wits, and will not truſt God with their health and ſtrength; they are double minded, as St James ſaith, they will have two ſtrings to their bow; if lawful means will

not ſerve, unlawful ſhall: No, but we "muſt commit ourſelves to God, as to a faithful creator," and then ſee what he will do; then it ſtands with his honour, he will look to the lowly, "I am the clay, thou art the potter," here I am, do as thou wilt, as David ſaith; it is a bleſſed eſtate thus to reſign ourſelves into God's hands. If the devil and reprobates could be brought to this, they ſhould never come there where they are in terrors of conſcience. Let us labour to practiſe this duty, Lord, I commit to thy hands my body and ſoul, I caſt myſelf into thy boſom, do with me as thou wilt. Some that have ſtood out at the ſtaves end with temptations many years, have gotten comfort by this reſignation. "We are the clay, thou art the potter," thou mayeſt mold and break as thou wilt. The way now to eſcape the plague is not altogether to uſe tricks of wit and policy, (though lawful means muſt be uſed), but labour to get into Chriſt, and reſign ourſelves into God's hand abſolutely, and ſay thus, "We are the clay," &c. Lord, thou mayeſt daſh us if thou wilt, as thou doſt now many hundreds weekly, thou mayeſt daſh us in that faſhion if thou wilt: Only we may have a deſire that God would make our lives and health precious to him, that we may ſerve him as if we were now in heaven, and that we may have grace to make good uſe of all. But if God has determined to take us away, let us reſign ourſelves into his hands. It is no matter though the body be "ſown in diſhonour, they ſhall be raiſed in honour." "We are the clay, he is the potter;" let him do what he will with our carcaſes and bodies, ſo he be merciful to our ſouls. The veſſels of clay, when they are turned to earth, they ſhall be renewed to better ſtuff, like the glorious body of Chriſt; then our ſouls and bodies ſhall be glorious by him that took a piece of fleſh and clay for us: Oh, the humility of Chriſt! we wonder that the ſoul ſhould animate a piece of clay, ſo excellent a thing as the ſoul is; much more may we wonder that the Son of God ſhould take a piece of fleſh and clay upon him, to take our nature of baſe earth, to make us eternally glorious as himſelf. Let it comfort us, tho' God daſh our clay in pieces as a potter, yet Chriſt, that took our clay to the unity of his perſon, our nature being ingrafted into him, he will make our bodies eternal and everlaſting as his own glorious body. Let us reſign ourſelves into God's hands, as the church here, "thou art the potter, we are the clay," and then we ſhall never miſcarry.

ST.

ST. PAUL'S CHALLENGE.

IN ONE SERMON.

ROM. viii. 30.

" *What then ſhall we ſay to theſe things? If God be for us, who* " *can be againſt us?*

THE words are a glorious concluſion, and triumph of faith: the concluſion upon all the former particulars in the chapter, and the foundation of all the comforts that follow after, to the end of the chapter. They are as the centre of the chapter; all the beams of heavenly comfort in this divine chapter, they meet as it were in one in this ſhort clauſe, " What ſhall we ſay then to theſe things," &c.

In the words briefly, there is, firſt, a queſtion, " What ſhall we ſay to theſe things?"

And then a triumph, " If God be with us, who can be againſt us?" It is a queſtion anſwered with another queſtion, " What ſhall we ſay to theſe things?" He anſwers it with another queſtion, " If God be with us, who can be againſt us?"

What ſhall we ſay to theſe things?

To theſe things before mentioned. If we be in Chriſt, there is no condemnation to us: if we be led by the ſpirit; if we be heirs of heaven, and fellow-heirs with Chriſt, if we ſuffer with him, if we have the ſpirit of prayer to help our infirmities in the worſt conditions, if all creatures groan with us, and if all work for our good; if God from all eternity, hath written our

in heaven by election, and ſeparated us from the reſt of the world in vocation, and hath ſanctified, and juſtified us, and will after glorify us—" what ſhall we ſay to theſe things?"

The heart of man is full of doubtings, and misgivings, full of thoughts. " According to the multitude of my thoughts, thy comforts refreſhed my ſoul," a multitude of thoughts, and a multitude of comforts; there is comfort after comfort, becauſe there are thoughts after thoughts, and ſurmiſes after ſurmiſes.—There is no waſte comfort ſet down in this chapter; and when he hath ſet down all, he comes, and concludes in a triumphant manner, " What ſhall we ſay to theſe things?" He propounds a queſtion to himſelf, he catechiſeth his own heart, and others, if theſe things be ſo, what can be ſaid againſt them?—Surely the unbelieving, doubting, dark, rebellious heart of man, hath many things to ſay againſt divine truths; for, though divine truths be brighter than the ſun, and there is no greater evidence of any thing in the world, yet they find no place in the unbelieving heart. Let God ſay what he will, the doubting heart is ready to gainſay it: but theſe truths are ſo pregnant and clear, that it is a wonder that any thing ſhould be ſaid againſt them—" What ſhall we ſay to theſe things?"

2. Again, he means, what comfort can you have more? what can you deſire more? what can be ſaid more? what uſe will you make of all that hath been ſaid? what will you ſuck out of it? If all this be true that hath been ſpoken before, that a chriſtian is ſo elevated above the common condition: if God love him from everlaſting in election, and to everlaſting in glorification; if, in the middle time, all ſhall work for the beſt, what comfort can the heart of man deſire more? and what uſe can you make of this for courage, and for comfort for the time to come? Theſe things are implied in this queſtion, " What ſhall we ſay to theſe things?"

Uſe.—It is good often to propound queſtions and demands to our own hearts, when we read or hear divine truths, to ask our own heart, you have heard theſe things, what ſay you to them? For, whatſoever God ſaith in his word, will do us no good, till we ſpeak to our own hearts, and be convinced of it, and ſay it is ſo: therefore we ſhould ſay to ourſelves, here are many comforts and duties preſſed; but what ſayeſt thou to it, my heart, doſt thou not ſtand out againſt comforts and advice? It is no matter what God

God ſaith, unleſs he overpower the unbelieving heart to ſay, "what ſhall I ſay to theſe things? ſhall I not agree with God, and his ſpirit, and his comforts? ſhall they be beſt in regard of an unbelieving heart? oh, no; therefore let our care be, to ſtore them in the treaſury of our memory, which ſhould be like the pot of manna, to contain heavenly comforts: let us treaſure up all the truths we can, all will be little enough, when we ſhall need comfort. But when we have them in our memory, let us ask ourſelves, are theſe things ſo, or no? If they be ſo, believe them, if they be not ſo, then let us give liberty to ourſelves, and away with hearing and reading, &c. If they be ſo, for ſhame let me yield to them.

Let us ask theſe queſtions with ſome fruit, let us deal thus with our own hearts, often call them to account, whether we believe or no; for we have ſuch a faculty, and power, we can reflect within ourſelves. And we ought to deſire of the ſpirit of God, to teach our hearts, to reflect upon themſelves, to examine whether we know, and if we know, whether we believe, and what uſe we make of theſe things, and why we ſhould live thus; doth this life and courſe of mine, agree with theſe principles? The beſt of us all are tardy this way; therefore, let not that part go without making ſome uſe of it. But I proceed to that which I will dwell more on.

If God be for us, who can be againſt us?

Here is firſt a ground laid, and then a comfort built upon it. The ground that is laid is, "If God be with us?" when he ſaith, "If God be with us?" he doth not put the caſe, but lays it as a ground. "If God be with us?" as indeed he is with all his, in electing them, in calling them, in working all for their good, in glorifying them after," &c. "If God be with us," as he is, then the comfort is built upon this ground, "Who ſhall, or can be againſt us?"

For the firſt, the ground that is laid, is that,

God is with his children.

Indeed, he is with the whole world, he is everywhere: but he is with his church and children in a more particular manner. The ſoul is ſpread in the whole body, but is in the brain after another manner, as it underſtands and reaſons. God is everywhere;

where; but he is not everywhere comforting, and directing, and ſanctifying, nor everywhere giving a bleſſed iſſue. So, beſides the general reſpect, that I will not now ſtand on, God is with us that are his in a more peculiar manner, in all his ſweet attributes: in his wiſdom to direct us; with his power, to aſſiſt and ſtrengthen us; by his grace and love to comfort us; and he is with us, in all our perplexities to ſtay our ſouls: he is with us by his ſweet and gracious mercy, to feed us with hidden manna, with ſecret comforts in the midſt of diſcomforts. When there is no comfort elſe with us, then God is with us. And then he is with us, in the iſſue of all that a godly man takes in hand in his name; he is with him in all his croſſes, to direct and turn them to his beſt good: "All things work for the beſt, to them that love God." He is with them in all his ſweet relations, a gracious Father in covenant, as a huſband. He is with them in thoſe ſweet compariſons, as a hen, as an eagle, to carry them on his wings above all dangers, as he carried the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs. He is with them in all comfortable relations.

Therefore God, in the ſcriptures, borrows names from every thing that is comfortable. He is with them as a rock to build on, as a ſhield to defend them. In the time of perſecution, he is a ſhadow; to keep them from the heat, he is with them as a light. Chriſt is our life in death, our light in darkneſs, our righteouſneſs in ſinfulneſs and guilt, our holineſs in impurity, our redemption in all our miſeries. There is ſomewhat of God in every creature, therefore God takes names from his own creatures, becauſe there is ſome ſtrength or comfort in them. God gives himſelf variety of names, as there are variety of our diſtreſſes. Are we in miſery? God is a rock, a ſhield, a tower of defence, a buckler; he is all that can be ſaid for comfort. He is with us in his attributes and ſweet relations, and all ſweet terms that may ſupport our faith; that whatſoever we ſee comfortable in the creature, we may riſe more comfortably to God, and ſay, God is my rock and ſhield, and my light, and defence.

And then God is with us in every condition, and in every place whatſoever; he is not only a God of the mountains, and not of the valleys, or a God of the valleys, and not of the mountains, as thoſe fooliſh people thought; but he is in all places, and at all times with his. If they be in priſon, he goes with them: Acts xvi. He made the priſon a kind of paradiſe, a heaven. If

they

they be baniſhed into other countries, he goes with them: "I will go with thee, O Jacob, into Egypt, and bring thee back again. If they be in death, he is with us to death, and in death: "In the valley of the ſhadow of death, thou art with me:" at all times whatſoever, and in all conditions, God is with us.

In all our affairs whatſoever, God is with us: "Fear not Joſhua, fear not, Moſes:" what was the ground of their comfort? "I will be with thee." He was with St Paul in all conditions, therefore he bids him fear not. So our bleſſed Saviour, the head of all, in Acts x. 38. in the ſpeech of Peter to Cornelius, he did all things well, "for God was with him:" you ſee how God is with his children.

What is the ground, that the great, and holy, and pure God, bleſſed for ever, ſhould be with ſuch ſinful and wretched creatures as we are; that he ſhould not only be with us, and about us, and compaſs us as a ſhield, but be in us?

The ground of all, is free love in Chriſt. Chriſt was God with us firſt. God, that he might be with us, ordained that Chriſt ſhould be God with us, Immanuel, that he ſhould take our nature into unity of perſon with himſelf. Chriſt being God with us, (that he might ſatisfy the juſt wrath of God for our ſins, and ſo reconcile God and us together), he hath made God and us friends: ſo that this, that God is with us, it is grounded upon an excellent and ſound bottom, upon the incarnation of our bleſſed Saviour, that for this very end, that God might be with us, that is, he was God and man, to bring God and man together: he was God and man in one, to bring God and man, that were at contrary terms, to terms of reconciliation; to recollect and bring us back again to God, from whence we fell. So the reaſon why God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, are with us; it is becauſe Chriſt, the ſecond perſon, God and man, is with us, or elſe there could be no ſuch ſweet terms as theſe are. You ſee how it is founded, Chriſt took our nature, and advanced and enriched it. Now, he having taken our nature, and our perſons to be one with him, how near are Chriſt and we together? There is one common ſpirit in him and us, one common Father, "I go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." There is one common kingdom and inheritance; we are fellow-heirs with him. Oh! how near is Chriſt to us; our ſouls are not ſo near our bodies as Chriſt is to us, and God in Chriſt. So you ſee this, that God is with us

us; it is founded upon an excellent, wonderful, comfortable myſtery. This I ſuppoſe is clear, therefore I come to that I intend farther to enlarge, that is, the comfort built upon this ground, "If God be with us,"

Who ſhall be againſt us?

One would think this a ſtrange queſtion; for a chriſtian no ſooner comes to be one with Chriſt, and ſo to be reconciled to God, but he hath againſt him all the powers of hell, and then he hath the whole world againſt him presently, ſatan's kingdom; and then he hath an enemy that is worſt of all, that stirs up ſtrife and rebellion and contention, even in his own heart, his own fleſh; ſo that we may ſay, Who is not againſt a chriſtian? if God be with us, all elſe but God will ſide againſt us. There are two grand ſides in the world, to which all belong; there is God's ſide and thoſe that are his, and there is another ſide, that is, ſatan's and thoſe that are his; two kingdoms, two ſeeds, two contrary diſpoſitions, that purſue one another, till all the one be in hell: ſatan and all his ſeed together, the devil and all that fight under his banner, that are led with his malignant poiſonous ſpirit; though it may be they cannot do more hurt, or do not out of politic reſpects, though they have poiſonous hearts, yet thoſe never leave contending till they be in hell; and the other never leave, till they be in heaven together. Chriſt makes it his prayer, "My will is, that where I am, they may be alſo," and his will muſt be performed, ſo that we need not aſk the queſtion, "If God be with us, who ſhall be againſt us?" there will be enow againſt us.

It is true; but in what ſenſe are they againſt us, and how far are they againſt us?

They are thus far againſt us in their wit, in their plots, and policies; in their wills they would devour all if they could: they are againſt us in their endeavours, they do what they can againſt the church and people of God. They are againſt us in their prevailing likewiſe; their endeavours are not idle, but prevail very far over God's people, even to inſolence, "where is now their God?" as it is oft in the Pſalms; and to the dejection of God's people, "The Lord hath forſaken me; The Lord hath forgotten me." God's people are brought very low, to the pit's brink, the pit almoſt ſhuts her mouth upon them. So you ſee they are againſt them many ways, God allows them to take their own ways.

And

And many reaſons God hath to let them prevail, both to draw out their malice the more, and to ſhew his people their corruptions the more, and then to exerciſe their graces in waiting, and for the juſt confuſion of their enemies at the latter end, and for the ſweet comfort of his children at the end, (when God ſees the fitteſt time to meet with the enemies) that they might have ſweet experience of God's ſeaſonable care, however God put off a long time for ſome reſpects; ſo you ſee they may prevail a long time. Yet who can be againſt us in this ſenſe, that is, to prevail altogether? who ſhall be againſt us ſo far as to have their will in the iſſue? They prevail a great way, what do they intend? not to prevail over the perſons of God's church and people, but the cauſe, which, in ſpite of ſatan and his inſtruments, and all, muſt ſtand invincible to the end of the world. They intend likewiſe to prevail over the courage of God's people, but that they cannot neither, for St Paul ſaith after in this chapter, "In all theſe things we are more than conquerors," that is, abundant conquerors, a ſtrange high term. But in ſome ſenſe, we are more than conquerors, for if we conſider what weak perſons God's children are, what ſtrong enemies they have, and what weak means they prevail with in the ſight of the world, of fleſh and blood, that ſuch perſons ſhould prevail over ſuch enemies by ſuch weak means as they do; in this reſpect they are more than conquerors. So he may ſay, "Who can be againſt us?" that is, to have their wills, to overthrow the cauſe of Chriſt and the courage of God's children; they may prevail in this or that particular, but at the laſt, all their plots and counſels ſhall prove abortive, and bring forth a lie. All is but to magnify God's power the more, in letting them go ſo far, and then to daſh all their molds and plots. God's children have the devil and all his company, the world, and the fleſh againſt them; but there is God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt for them, the bleſſed Trinity, that are able to blow away the other three, and all the ſtrength and ſupport they have whatſoever.

Who ſhall be againſt us?

It is not a queſtion of doubting or inquiry to learn any thing, but it is a queſtion of triumph, he doth (as it were) challenge, and bid defiance to all enemies whatſoever, "Who ſhall be againſt us?" Let them ſtand out, ſatan, and the world, and all ſatan's ſupports, let them do their worſt. There is a ſtrange confidence which is ſeated in the hearts of God's children, that they

they can thus dare hell, and earth, and all infernal powers, they ſet God ſo high in their hearts, that they dare ſay with a ſpirit of confidence, "Who ſhall be againſt us?" the meaning is not, Who ſhall be againſt us, to take away our lives, our liberties, &c. as the ſpeech is, they may kill us, but they cannot hurt us; the worſt they can do, is to ſend us to heaven, and make us partakers of what we deſire moſt. Firſt, we deſire that God will be with us here; and ſecondly, that we may be with him in heaven: they make God's children partakers of their deſires by killing of them. Let tyrants, and all perſons that have a malignant diſpoſition to the church of God, and are armed with power, let them do their worſt, the cauſe muſt ſtand impregnable; Chriſt will have a church and kingdom in the world, and their ſpirits will be impregnable againſt them; they may kill them, but they cannot hurt them; they may kill them, but they cannot kill their courage. As we ſee in the Martyrs, there was the ſpirit of God in them, above all the dealings of the perſecutors; there was a fire of God's ſpirit in them above all outward fire whatſoever. You ſee it muſt be taken for granted, that the church of God, and every particular chriſtian, hath many enemies againſt them, as it is, Pſal. cxxix. "From my youth up" (ſaith the church) "they have fought againſt me, but they have not prevailed." From my youth up, from Abel, to the laſt ſaint that ſhall be in the world, there will be always ſome againſt God's people; yet their comfort is, that none ſhall be againſt them to prevail, either over the ſpirit of God in them, or over the cauſe that they manage.

Uſe.—Firſt of all you ſee then, that the ſtate of a chriſtian in this world is an impregnable ſtate, and a glorious condition. Here is glory upon glory, from this clauſe to the end of the chapter. "If God be with us, who ſhall be againſt us? If God gave his Son for us, ſhall he not with him give us all things elſe?" there is another glorious ſpeech, "Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's people?" another glorious triumphant ſpeech, another glorious ſpeech. "Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of God founded in Chriſt?" He loves Chriſt firſt, and us in Chriſt as members, and as he loves him eternally, ſo he loves us eternally too. Therefore you ſee every way the ſtate of a chriſtian is a glorious condition, "Who can be againſt us?" You ſee the ſtate of God's people, it is an impregnable and glorious condition. Then, by this means, thoſe that are ſtrange paradoxes to fleſh and blood, yet they agree in a chriſtian. He is never

never alone, when he is alone, God is with him, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt are with him, Angels are with him, God is not only with him, but his guard is with him, and God's ſpirit is with him, and in him, victoriouſly both in grace and comfort. Chriſt ſaith to his diſciples, when they thought to leave him alone, ſaith he, you cannot leave me alone, "My Father is with me:" and St. Paul, towards his latter end, that had deſerved ſo well of the chriſtian world, "All forſook me" (ſaith he), "but the Lord forſook me not, but delivered me out of the mouth of the lion." So a chriſtian is not alone, he is not left to the mercy of his enemies, but God is with him, and who ſhall be againſt him to prevail over him?

Again, though a chriſtian be a worm, a perſon trampled upon; for the church is the moſt afflicted part of mankind: yet fear not, thou worm Jacob. The world accounts them as worms, and they account themſelves ſo, they are trodden on as worms; they are worms upon earth, yet they have a glorious head in heaven, and a glorious guard about them, ſtrange things agree in a chriſtian: therefore let us not ſtumble, though we ſee not theſe things preſently—the life of a chriſtian is a myſtery.

Again, hence we ſee that a chriſtian profeſſion, to be a ſound chriſtian, to have true faith in Chriſt, to be one with Chriſt, and to be taken out of the ſtate of nature; this condition, and the happineſs of it, hath the ſtrongeſt foundation of any life in the world. Chriſtianity is founded upon the ſtrongeſt and the greateſt reaſons that can be. Faith ſtands with the greateſt reaſon that a thing can do: Why? the comfort of a chriſtian is, that he hath no enemy that ſhall prevail over him. And what is the ground of that? God is with him, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt. Faith is that which lays hold upon the preſence and promiſe, and covenant of God; and is not faith well-bottomed? A chriſtian that carries himſelf valiantly and courageouſly, is not his courſe grounded on ſound reaſon? Is not God with him? God the Father is his Father; God the Son is his Redeemer; God the Holy Ghoſt is his comforter. There are no other men that have ſtrong reaſon for their courſe; for that choice that they make of their religion, and of their ways, they prove but fools in the concluſion; only the ſound chriſtian, that by the ſpirit of God, hath his eyes open to ſee the curſed eſtate he is in by nature, and what it is to be in Chriſt, and by a ſpirit of faith is made one with Chriſt; he is the truly wiſe man

in

in his faith and reliance that the world mocks at, that he hath no common ſupports in the world, which he cares not for, if God be on his ſide, he cares not what man can do unto him, as it is Pſal. cxviii. You ſee on what ground it is founded: God is with him, and none can be againſt him.

Let us labour to lay up theſe principles, and work according as our principles are: Principles are the foundation of all concluſions that ariſe from them. As our grounds are, ſo are we, in our faith, and working, and grace, and comfort, every way: if we have rotten prineiples, if the grounds of our comfort be rotten, our courſe will be rotten and uncomfortable in the concluſion. Let us build upon the rock, to be well bottomed and founded, that our principles and grounds be ſtrong, and that they be ſo to us; for what if God be with his, if he be not ſo to us? Let us labour to lay up ſound grounds. Grounds have influence upon the whole courſe of our lives, in doing, in ſuffering, in all conditions. I know not a more pregnant fruitful principle in the ſcripture than this, "If God be with us, who can be againſt us?" It is like a pearl, little in quantity, few in words, but ſtrong in ſenſe, large in the fruit that iſſues from it. Therefore, as we may carry pearls or precious things whereſoever we go, becauſe there is a great deal of worth in them, and they are ſmall in quantity, ſo we may carry this principle with us; let us be ſure to lay it up, and make uſe of it. There are theſe two, That there is a God, and that God is with his children; and ſo with his children, that he will ſubvert and overthrow all their enemies, and all their plots and endeavours—a principle of wonderful comfort.

If this principle be well laid, it is a ground of a chriſtian's courage in all conditions whatſoever. It is no matter how many enemies he hath; for, as Cyprian ſaith, "the world cannot hurt him, that in the world hath God for his protector:" for the devil, he is cruſhed already, though he keep ado, and ſtir up ſtorms, he periſheth in the waves, (as he ſaith), he hurts himſelf more than any body elſe; he increaſeth his own torment, and ſo do all his children. The fleſh likewiſe, it buſtles againſt the ſpirit, but it loſeth, and the ſpirit gains upon every defeat: why, here is the principle, God is with us, there is no power can reſiſt God, for then God ſhould withſtand himſelf. The power that the creature hath, it is but a borrowed power; and, if by a borrowed power, it ſhould withſtand God's purpoſe, God muſt be againſt himſelf, his kingdom muſt be divided, which is

a

a contradiction. Therefore this is the ground of the courage of a chriſtian in all conditions. What is the reaſon that the ſcripture hath that phraſe ſo often, "Fear not, I am with thee;" as as to Paul, and Joſhua, and the reſt? becauſe it is the ground of all courage. We ſee weaker creatures than man; a dog, in the ſight of his maſter, he will fight courageouſly, becauſe he hath a ſuperior nature by him, that he thinks will back him: and, ſhall not a chriſtian, when he has laid up this principle, that God is with him, God incarnate, God in his nature, when he is a member of God, as it were, of that perſon that is God, ſhall he not be courageous when he hath him to look upon him, and to back him?

And if God be with us, he is not ſo with us as to neglect us; he is ſo with us, as he hath intereſt in the cauſe we have, and in our perſons; he is with us as one with us, nay as in us by his ſpirit, and whoſoever toucheth us, toucheth the apple of his eye. "Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?" Here is ground of courage, in whatſoever may befal us, to ſtand it out in all conditions whatſoever. Nothing can ſeparate Chriſt and a chriſtian; this body will never be beheaded; Chriſt will never be ſeparated from this body, he will not loſe the pooreſt member he hath. You ſee it is the duty of a chriſtian to be courageous and undaunted in the cauſe of God; and from this ground, becauſe God is with him, and who can be againſt him? Let all the world be againſt God, and againſt the cauſe that a chriſtian profeſſeth, they daſh againſt a rock, as the waves that break themſelves, they do not hurt the rock a whit; they do but caſt ſtones upward, that fall upon their heads again. Therefore it is a deſperate cauſe that malicious ſpirits manage, who have more parts than grace, and arm themſelves and their wits, to hurt the people and church of God, and ſlander his cauſe, and do all the hurt they can.

It is ground likewiſe of encouragement in our callings; when God calls us to any thing, in our places, that is good, he will be with us: therefore, in our places and ſtanding, let us do that which belongs to us; let us not fear that we ſhall want that which is neceſſary, or miſcarry any way. When Moſes pretended he could not ſpeak, "Who gives a mouth," ſaith God to him? Therefore, let us take courage, not only in ſuffering and oppoſition, but in our places and ſtandings. God will be

with us, he gives his angels charge to keep us in our ways; we have a guard over us.

Here is a ground likewiſe of full contentment in any condition in the world; what can be ſufficient to him that God cannot ſuffice? God all-ſufficient is with thee, thou canſt want nothing that is for thy good; thou mayeſt want this and that, but it is for thy good that thou wanteſt it. "Thoſe that fear God, ſhall want nothing that is good." It is a ground of all contentment, God is with them to fill their ſouls to the utmoſt. He is made for the ſoul, and the ſoul for him; for our end is to have communion with God in Jeſus Chriſt here, and everlaſtingly in heaven. God is fitted for us, and we for him. Here is freſh comfort for the ſoul always; he can fill up every corner of our ſoul, he is larger than our ſouls. Therefore let us be content; in what condition ſoever we are in, God is with us. Therefore, "let the peace of God, which paſſeth all underſtanding, guard our hearts;" even from this very ground and concluſion, "God is with us, who can be againſt us?" Let Moſes be caſt into a basket of bulruſhes, if God be with him, he ſhall not be drowned: Let Daniel be caſt into the den, if God be with him, he will come between the lion's teeth and him: Let the three bleſſed men be caſt into the fiery furnace, a fourth ſhall be with them, and keep them from the hurt of the flame: Let God be with Noah, he ſhall ſwim upon the waters; and the greater the water, the more ſafe he, and the nearer to heaven: Let God be with us, and we may be content with any condition whatſoever.

Again, let us not be overmuch diſcouraged with our infirmities and corruptions; "If God be with us, who can be againſt us?" Our corruptions are againſt us, and they are worſe to me than the devil, and all enemies, ſaith a poor chriſtian. Indeed they are; for the devil hath no advantage againſt us, but by our corruptions. But if thou account thy corruptions thine enemies, they are God's enemies, and Chriſt's enemies, as well as thine; he will be with thee, and thy corruptions ſhall more and more be waſted; for the fleſh ſhall fall before the ſpirit; this Dagon ſhall fall before the bleſſed ark—ſtronger is he that is with us, than he that is in the world. The ſpirit of God is ſtronger in us, than corruption in us, or the world without us; it miniſters ſtronger grounds of comfort than all others can do of diſcomfort. If you be under the ſpirit and under grace, "ſin ſhall not

not have dominion over you:" it may be in you, but it ſhall not have dominion, becauſe you are under the covenant of grace. Therefore, though corruption be in us, for our exercife and humiliation, yet it ſhall not be againſt us, to abridge us of comfort; they ſerve to drive us nearer to God. Let none be diſcouraged, "Chriſt came to deſtroy the works of the devil;" therefore he came to deſtroy ſin in us, which is the work of the devil; he came to take away, not only the guilt, but the very being of ſin, as he will at laſt; for if God and Chriſt be with us, who will be againſt us?

Object.—But it may be objected by ſome: But I find not God with me.

Anſ.—It is true, ſometimes God hides himſelf—"Thou art a God that hideſt thyſelf:" he ſeems as a ſtranger in his own church, to be as a way-faring man, as the prophet ſaith; he takes no notice of the church and their afflictions, he ſeems not to take them to heart, nor to pity his church. Oh! this is but for a time, and for trial. "Can a mother forget her child?" Iſa. xlix. Suppoſe ſhe ſhould, "yet will I not forget thee." God hides himſelf but a while, to try the graces of his children, and to give way to the enemies, to let his children ſee their corruptions, and his wiſe diſpenſations. And theſe deſertions we muſt be acquainted with. God ſeems to be away from his children, yet he is with them, and ſupports them with inviſible ſtrength. He ſeems to be with wicked men in proſpering them in the world, that they have all at their will in outward things, yet he is far from them; he withdraws himſelf in ſpiritual things, they have no grace, no ſound inward comfort. And he ſeems oppoſite to his children, he leaves them outwardly, in regard of aſſiſtance, and friends: but they have an inviſible inward preſence of the ſpirit, to ſupport and ſtrengthen them. Therefore meaſure not deſertions, God's being, or not being with us, by outward reſpects: for ſo he is with the enemies of his church oft-times, and not with his children. But he is with his in the ſweeteſt manner, ſupporting of them when they are in darkneſs, aud ſee no light of God's countenance; yet they have ſo much light, though they think they ſee it not, as makes them truſt in God; "Let him that is in darkneſs, and ſees no light, truſt in the name of God," Therefore, as I ſaid, it is a principle pregnant with comfort and uſe. If God be with

us, he is with us in life and death; for whom he loves, he loves everlaſtingly, from everlaſting to everlaſting.

Queſt.—If this be ſo, what ſhall we do to God again? what is the beſt evidence to know that God is with us?

Anſ.—There is a relation between God and his; he is ſo with them, as that they are with him likewiſe in all paſſages. Doth he chuſe them? they in time chuſe him, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in earth that I deſire in compariſon of thee." Doth he call them? they anſwer. Doth he juſtify and free them from their ſins, they make that anſwer of faith that Peter ſpeaks of, "I do believe, Lord help my unbelief;" they have faith to lay hold upon forgiveneſs.

2. And likewiſe, if God be with them, they can delight in God's preſence. Can God delight to be preſent with them that have not grace to delight in him? God's children maintain their communion with him in all the ſanctified means they can —they are afraid to break with God. Therefore thoſe that, to pleaſe and give content to others, and for baſe ends, will diſdiſpleaſe their God, it is a heavy ſign that God as yet hath not ſhewn himſelf in his gracious mercy in Chriſt Jeſus to them.

3. If God be with us, we ſhall be of his ſide; and his enemies ſhall be our enemies, and his friends our friends. He that claims this, that God is with him, he will ſay, I will be with God, and for God. God hath two things in the world, that we muſt have a care of his church and his cauſe: take them out of the world, the world is but a hell upon earth, a company of miſcreants, profane, without God, impudent, poiſonous creatures. Take away the cauſe of God, religion, and the people that are gotten by religion, and what is the reſt of mankind? The world would not ſtand (but be all upon heaps) for a company of ſinful wretches that will have their wills. But it is for the church, and people of God, that the world ſtands. Now, he that hath God with him, is in terms with God, and they are friends, (as Abraham was the friend of God); he will ſide with God and religion; God's cauſe ſhall be his cauſe, and God's people his people; he will cleave to God's ſide as the ſafeſt; if he may have never ſo much preferment in the world, he will never join the cauſe of antichriſt; he will not betray the cauſe of religion, if he might have a world for it: Why? becauſe he knows, if God be with him, who can be againſt him?

God

God hath given us underſtanding and grace to maintain friendſhip with him, to have common friends and comm·n enemies: Therefore, if we ſtand not for God, let us never talk of God's preſence with us. He will be preſent to confound us, to overthrow us, and to purſue us to hell; but not graciouſly preſent, except we labour to maintain the cauſe of religion as far as we may. "God is with us, if we be with him," 2 Chron. xv. if we be with God to take his part, he will be with us to protect and defend us, to guide and comfort us, and to give iſſue to all our affairs. Not that our being with him is the prime cauſe of his being with us; but it is an evidence to know whether he be with us (as we make profeſſion), when, as far as our callings will ſuffer, we are with him, and maintain his cauſe.

4. Again, If we would know whether we be with God, and he with us, ask conſcience whether it be with thee; for conſcience is God's deputy. Is conſcience with thee, doſt thou not ſin againſt conſcience? What conſcience ſaith, God ſaith; and what it forbids, God forbids, eſpecially when it is enlightened by the word; doth conſcience ſpeak peace to thee from the word? then thou art with God, and God is with thee. Eſpecially in the great point of juſtification, doth conſcience ſpeak peace to thee in the blood of Chriſt? is thy heart ſprinkled with it; that it is not as the blood of Abel that cries for vengeance? haſt thou a ſpirit of faith, to believe that Chriſt ſhed his blood for thee in particular? then thou art with God, and he with thee, becauſe God hath ſprinkled the blood of Chriſt upon thy heart.

Queſt.—What courſe ſhall we take to keep God comfortably with us?

Anſw.—1. Look thou be in covenant with him; and not only at large in covenant; but look that continually, upon all occaſions, thou renew thy covenant: for ſometimes God's children may be in covenant, they may be his children; yet becauſe they renew not their covenant, eſpecially after ſome breaches, God is not with them ſo comfortably as he would, to free them from their enemies; as we ſee in the caſe of the Benjamites, God's people may ſometimes have the worſt, though they be in covenant, becauſe they have committed ſome ſin, and have not renewed their peace and covenant with God. Therefore, if we would make a comfortable uſe of this truth, that God is with us, and would find him ſo in our affairs and buſineſs, let us renew our covenant upon all occaſions, and our purpoſe to pleaſe God.

2. And then look to the cauſe we take in hand, and to our carriage in that cauſe; if our perſons be good, be in covenant, and the cauſe good, and our carriage ſuitable, then God will be with us. Let us make uſe of theſe principles, that we may be in love with the comfortable ſecure condition of a chriſtian; there is no ſtate ſo glorious, ſo comfortable, ſo ſecure, and free from danger If we were in heaven, and ſhould look down below upon all ſnares and dangers, what would we care for them? Now, if he be with us, and we with him, "God is our habitation, we dwell in the ſecret of the almighty, he is our high tower; the way of wiſdom is on high, to eſcape the ſnares below." Therefore let us raiſe our ſouls as high as heaven and God is, and ſet ourſelves where our hopes are, where our God is, and we have ſet ourſelves in our tower, when we have ſet God in our hearts, and ſet ourſelves in him; then we may overlook the devil, and men, and death, and danger, and all. As a man that ſtands upon the top of a rock that is higher than all the waves, he overlooks them, and ſees them break themſelves upon the rock: ſo, when we ſee God with us, and ourſelves with him, by a ſpirit of comfort, we can overlook all with a holy defiance, as the apoſtle ſaith here, "Who can be againſt us?" what can ſeparate us? Oh! the excellent ſtate of a chriſtian, when he is aſſured of his condition! Who would not labour for aſſurance that yields this abundant comfort in all conditions?

I. A word of the occaſion for which I made choice of this portion of Scripture. Here is a double fitneſs to the occaſion, both at home and abroad, "If God be with us, who can be againſt us?"

God was at home in 1588; he was with us in the powder-treaſon: he was with us in the great ſickneſs, to preſerve us, and to give us our lives for a prey, he hath been with us. And we ought not to forget this; but, upon occaſion of this great deliverance, to call all former deliverances to mind, national and perſonal, to conſider how often God hath given us our lives, and how often he hath preſerved us from death; and to take occaſion to bleſs God for all at once, and ſo to make ſome ſpecial uſe of theſe meetings.

Then if we look abroad, God hath been with us, in that he hath been with his church; for they, and we, make but one body; that member that hath not a ſympathy with the body, it is but a dead member: therefore, if we be not affected with the preſence

preſence of God, with the armies abroad, we are dead members. We may ſay, in regard of theſe outward deliverances, "God hath been with us, and none hath been againſt us." If God had not been with us in the powder-plot, where had we been? Our lives would have been made a prey; that which would have been done, would have been more than the blowing up of the parliament; they would have blown up the kingdom with the king, and religion with religious perſons, and the ſtate with ſtateſmen. It would have brought a confuſion of all, and have moulded all after an idolatrous antichriſtian faſhion; it would have overthrown the ſtate, and perſons, and all; the iſſues would have been worſe than the preſent thing. And therefore, if God had not been graciouſly with us, what would have become of us? As it is in Pſal. cxxix. "If God had not been with us, they had made us a prey," and overwhelmed and devoured us all, there had been no hope.

Have not we cauſe to bleſs God, and to be thankful? therefore let us labour to do it for ourſelves, and for our neighbours. How ſhall we ſhew our thankfulneſs to God? not in outward manifeſtations only, which is laudable, and a good demonſtration of the affections of people; but alas what is that? we muſt ſhew our thankfulneſs in loving that religion that God hath ſo witneſſed for, and defended ſo miraculously: Labour to love the truth, to entertain it in the love of it, and to bring our hearts to a more perfect hatred of popery: for if we wax cold and indifferent, or oppoſe God's cauſe, and undermine it, do we think that God would ſuffer this long, would he not throw us out of his mouth? (with reverence I ſpeak it.) Though he have defended us again and again, he will be gone with his truth and religion. It came not alone, nor it will not go alone: if religion go, our peace, and proſperity, and the flouriſhing of our ſtate—all will go. It is our ark; if that go away, our happineſs goes away. Let us make much of religion, that is the way to be thankful.

Again, let us ſhew our thankfulneſs by giving and doing ſome good to the poor, by refreſhing their bowels, that they may have occaſion to bleſs God.

And for the time to come, let us truſt in God, that God will be with us, if we be with him, and ſtick to him: who then ſhall be againſt us? Let the devil, and Rome, and hell, be all againſt us, if God be with us. Bellarmine goes about to prove

Luther a falſe prophet. Luther, as he was a courageous man, and had a great and mighty ſpirit of faith, and prayer: ſo his expreſſions were ſuitable to his ſpirit; what ſaith he? The cauſe that I defend, is Chriſt's, and God's cauſe; and all the world ſhall not ſtand againſt it—it ſhall prevail. If there is a counſel in earth, there is a counſel in heaven that will diſappoint all. God laughs in heaven at his enemies, and ſhall we weep? And things are in a good way, if we can go on, and help the cauſe of God with our prayers, and faith that God will go on; and with our cheerfulneſs and joy, that God may delight to go on with his own cauſe. We may encourage ourſelves; though perhaps we ſhall not ſee the iſſue of theſe things, yet poſterity ſhall ſee it.

THE

THE

CHURCH'S ECHO.

IN ONE SERMON.

REV. xxii. 17.

"*And the ſpirit, and the bride, ſay, Come.*"

THIS book of the Revelation is a hiſtory of the ſtate of the church from the firſt coming of Chriſt to his ſecond coming. Theſe two laſt chapters ſet down the glorious condition of the church, in the latter end of the world, and as it ſhall be at the conſummation of all things; when the preſent ſtate of things ſhall determine in the ſecond coming of Chriſt. For, howſoever, no doubt but there is ſet down the glorious condition of the church in this world in part: yet the deſire of the church reſts not in any condition here, therefore it is carried to the conſummation and perfection of all. There ſhall be a kind of new world at the converſion of the Jews. But when the church is under that bleſſed condition, yet it is under deſires ſtill of farther perfection, till an end be made of all things. Therefore, this ſaying here, "Come," hath reference to the future ſtate of the church. All the deſires of the church are reſtleſs till the conſummation of all things in the latter coming of Chriſt. It carries all before it in a deſire, Come Lord, therefore, to call the Jews; Come Lord, to confound antichriſt, which muſt be before that: for the Jews will never come in, till the ſcandal of idolatry be removed. And when all this is fulfilled, then come Lord, to make an end of this ſinful world.

As

As it is with a river, it carries all before it, till it diſcharge itſelf into the ocean, where it is ſwallowed up; ſo it is with the deſires of a chriſtian; they carry all in the mean time, between heaven and them, in a ſtream, and never reſt till they be ſwallowed in heaven itſelf, and the ſecond coming of Chriſt to finiſh all things; and then is the period of all happineſs, and the accompliſhment of all promiſes, when Chriſt ſhall come to be glorified in his ſaints.

The words are, as it were, an echo, an anſwer back again, of the bride, the ſpouſe of Chriſt, unto his promiſe of his coming, which he makes twice in this chapter. In ver. 7. "Behold, I come quickly;" and in ver. 12. "Behold I come quickly;" and he comes not empty handed, "My reward is with me." Now the church here echoes back again; Chriſt ſaith, "I come," and, "the ſpirit, and the bride, ſay, Come." The words contain the moſt heavenly deſire that can be, of the moſt excellent perſonage in this world, the queen, the bride of Chriſt; and it is a deſire of the moſt excellent perſon abſolutely, Chriſt himſelf, a deſire of his coming; and it is ſtirred up by the moſt excellent ſpirit, the holy ſpirit of God: for the meaning of the words is this, "The ſpirit and the bride ſay, Come," not as diſtinct and ſeparate; but the bride by the ſpirit ſaith, "Come," the Holy Ghoſt in the bride, as it is in Rom. viii. 26. "We know not what to pray for, but the ſpirit makes interceſſion;" How is that? The ſpirit makes interceſſion, by making us make interceſſion: for what Chriſt doth, the ſpirit cauſeth us to do; for there is one ſpirit in Chriſt, and us. So the bride, by the motion of the holy and bleſſed ſpirit, ſays, "Come." The order of our diſcourſe upon theſe words ſhall be this,

Firſt, to ſpeak of the perſon wiſhing, and her condition, "the bride."

And then of the deſire of this excellent perſonage, the bride.

And then of the moving cauſe that ſtirs up the bride to deſire the coming of Chriſt.

Firſt, for the perſon, the bride.

The church is ſometimes compared to a woman for weakneſs; ſometimes to a wife, for faithfulneſs to her husband Chriſt; ſometimes to a bride, becauſe ſhe is contracted to Chriſt in this world; ſometimes to a mother for her fruitfulneſs; ſometimes to a virgin, for her chaſtity: here to a bride, becauſe this life is

but

but the time of contract; but the conſummation of the marriage ſhall be in heaven. Now, this contract is between the church and Chriſt, and between every particular ſoul and Chriſt: for both are the bride of Chriſt. Even as it is the ſame ſoul that is in the little finger, and in all the whole body, the ſame ſoul enlivens both: ſo it is the ſame ſpirit in the bride in general, and in every particular chriſtian, therefore the bride is both every particular chriſtian, and the whole church. Now the contract that is made between the ſoul, and between the church and Chriſt, it is by the ſpirit of God, which knits the ſoul to Chriſt, and Chriſt to the ſoul. And for this end, that Chriſt might be a huſband, and contract this bride to himſelf in our nature, he married our nature, that he might marry our perſons.

There is a threefold degree of union:

1. An union of nature. 2. An union of grace. 3. An union of glory.

The union of nature was, when Chriſt took our nature upon him. The union of grace, is when we take his nature, when we partake of the divine nature. The union of glory is when we ſhall all be in heaven. The firſt is, for the ſecond, and the ſecond for the third. Chriſt became bone of our bone, in nature, that we might be bone of his bone, with him, in grace; and ſo perfectly one with him in glory. We ſee the bride, that is the perſon. Here I might take occaſion to ſpeak of the ſweet comfort that iſſues from this, that the ſecond perſon in the Trinity ſhould dignify us ſo much, as to take us to unity with, and contract us to himſelf. But I will not ſpeak much of this point, having ſpoken more at large of it out of the Canticles.

If marriage be honourable, what is this marriage and contract? which is indeed the pattern of all others; others are but ſhadows to this. Hence comes the ſweet ſecurity and peace of the church, from this contract between Chriſt and it: for all our debts are diſcharged by this, he took upon him our ſins. And then the church hath intereſt in him, and all his, in this contract and marriage which is to be conſummate, all that he is and hath, is the church's. "All is yours, becauſe you are Chriſts." What a large comfort is this, if we had hearts to conſider of it, and to improve it! His grace ſerves for the church, "Of his fulneſs we receive grace for grace" So we may ſay of all the privileges that Chriſt hath; they are firſt in him, and then in

in the church; the church ſhines in his beams. And, as it is matter of wondrous comfort, ſo it is likewiſe matter of more ſpecial comfort, in caſe of infirmities. The church is a woman, therefore the weaker veſſel. Now God, that bids us "bear with the woman as the weaker veſſel," to honour her with the honour of gentle uſage; for that honour is meant. He that teacheth man his duty, will he not perform it himſelf? to bear with his church, as the weaker veſſel. Eſpecially when it is the condition of the marriage, Hoſea ii. "I will marry thee to me in mercy." We may claim mercy as a part of our dowry by Chriſt, pardoning mercy; we make not uſe of this comfort, when we are diſcouraged.

But this teacheth us likewiſe how to carry ourſelves to Chriſt as we ſhould do, chaſtely; to take heed how we judge of things, we muſt keep our judgements chaſte. A chriſtian hath not liberty to riot in his opinion, to run at random, to ſee what carnal reaſon ſaith: No, he muſt think as Chriſt thinks, and ſubmit his judgement to him. And he muſt have no will of his own, he muſt give it up to his contracted huſband, Chriſt, and be content to be ruled by him in all things; he muſt forget his father's houſe, and his former condition; and not to make this marriage, (as carnal profeſſors do), a cover for their adulterous unfaithfulneſs. What is the courſe of many chriſtians? They make the profeſſion of religion a cover for their ill dealing, for their unfaithful courſes—what a ſhame is this! it is abominable. What makes the faults of wives worſe than the faults of ſingle perſons? becauſe they are contrary to covenants, beſides many other inconveniences, the confuſion of offspring, and the like: but this is one grand difference to make the exaggeration of the fault, it is contrary to former covenant. Thoſe that are ſwearers, and filthy perſons, that diſgrace religion, and yet notwithſtanding cover themſelves under pretence that they are contracted to Chriſt, they are baptiſed, and come to the ſacrament, &c. ſuch wretched perſons ſhall know ere long what it is to dally with religion. What is the aggravation of the faults of ſuch perſons? They deal as filthy adultereſſes do, they make religion a cover for their wretched courſes. God is merciful, Chriſt died, we are chriſtians, we are baptiſed, &c. This is an obligation to a ſtricter life; it gives men no liberty, but is a ſtricter bond to a holy life, the renewing of the new covenant again and again. Therefore there is no comfort for any ſuch wretched perſons that countenance themſelves under the profeſſion of religion; it adds

adds a greater degree to their offence: "Oh ye adulterers and adultereſſes," ſaith St James, "know ye not that the love of the world is enmity with God?" When we let our hearts looſe to vain things, and yet pretend that we are contracted to Chriſt, we are adulterers and adultereſſes.

I beſeech you, therefore, in the name of Chriſt: for it is our office that are miniſters, to bring Chriſt and his ſpouſe together, we are paranymphi, friends of the bridegroom, as it is in the New Teſtament. Let me entreat you in good earneſt, thoſe that have not ſeriouſly given up their names to Chriſt to be contracted to him, to join with him in good earneſt; and to reſign all to him in your inward man, in your judgements, and wills, and affections, and then you ſhall find it the moſt comfortable condition in this world Indeed, all is nothing to the comfort of this condition, to be indeed, and not in outward profeſſion only, in in covenant with Chriſt, to be contracted to him. If not, if you will take liberty under the profeſſion of religion, to live looſely, to be ſwearers, and filthy perſons; to uſe your tongues as you liſt, as if you had made no promiſe to Chriſt, as indeed we all have, what will be the confuſion of your ſouls ere long? Oh, that we dallyed with religion, that we were entreated to be as we ſhould be by all ſweet bonds, and yet we preferred our own luſts, and baſe affections. This will be the aggravation of hell and damnation itſelf; this entreaty of Chriſt, and the excellent prerogatives and privileges that we have in Chriſt; and in the mean time, we ſtand upon our own baſe courſes, and will not leave any thing, to give up ourſelves to Chriſt. But I mean not to dwell on this. This is the perſon, "the bride;" ſhe is called the bride, and not the wife, becauſe ſhe is only contracted here on earth; and ſhe is called the bride, in oppoſition to the whore of Babylon in this book, that is, the filthy adultereſs, the falſe church The true church of Chriſt is a bride, and a virgin; in heaven, ſhe ſhall be a wife: the falſe church is a whore; ſhe defiles herſelf with idolatry and abominations. So, partly for diſtinction from itſelf, in heaven, where it ſhall be a wife, and partly in oppoſition to the falſe church, ſhe is here called a bride.

To come, in the next place, to the deſire of the church. How ſhould the church know ſhe is a bride? This is one way—the deſire of the marriage, of the conſummation of it, a deſire of the coming of Chriſt. In this there are two things conſiderable.

Firſt,

First, that Christ will come.

And then, the church hath a desire of this coming. That Christ will come, I need spend no time to prove it; for it is an article of faith, "He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." And he will come to make an end of what he hath begun here. He came to redeem our souls; he must, and he will come to redeem our bodies from corruption. He came to be judged, and to die for us, he must come to be judge of the quick and dead. He came to contract us, he will come again to marry us, and to take us where he is. He loved us so, that he came from heaven to earth where we are, to take our nature, that he might be a fit husband; but he will come to take us to himself, we shall enter "into his chamber, to the palace of the great king," Psal. xlv. He will come—there is no question of that.

The uneven carriage of things in this world, to the eyes of men, evinceth so much. You see how it is here with mighty persons that shake off Christ's yoke; how they bear the sway; how satan aids them in opposing Christ—he rules in the children of pride. This must not always be so; there must, and will be a time, when Christ will "be glorious in his saints."—Now, the life of Christ, in his saints, is a hidden life—there must be a day of revelation. And, even as it was in Christ's first coming, there was all kind of arguments and witnesses, to prove that he should come in the flesh, a choir of angels from heaven to witness it; and, on earth, the wise men among the Gentiles; and, among the Jews, old Simeon; there were men and women—all kind of witnesses. So, in his second coming, there is all kind of witnesses. In this chapter, there is Christ and the angel, and John, and the spirit, and the spouse, and the church in general, and every particular soul; their desire of his coming, shews that he will come; for the desires stirred up in the heart by the Holy Ghost, they will not be vain The desires of his coming shew that he will come; for spiritual desires must have their accomplishment. There will be a coming of Christ, there is no question of that.

And the church here desires it. It is the disposition of the church to be carried in her desires to it; wherein we will shew the ground of this desire. And then the use that we are to make of it.

The

The grounds why the church desires the coming of Christ, are manifold.

1. Look but to the present condition of things in this world, the state of things, the scandals that are in the church: there will be a desire in the church that all scandals may be removed, as it is in the gospel, "Christ will come, and take away all that offend."

2. Look again to the state of the church here, it is but a persecuted afflicted estate; nay, those that should countenance the poor church, how roughly is the poor church used oftentimes by those? Those that should encourage the church, their rugged and rough usage stirs up this desire in the church, when those that should give most encouragement, are oftentimes the greatest discouragement.

3. Then again the church hath antichrist to oppose it, and false brethren in it; false persons that hang in their affections to the world; and however they make a shew, yet their minds are carried to pomp, a false religion, because they are besotted with a proud carnal disposition, which they prefer before the simplicity of the gospel; vain persons, in the bosom of the church, that know not what the glory of the church is.

4. Then again, if we regard even the weakness of the church itself, it breeds a desire of Christ's coming: for alas, there is but a weak sight in men; and variety of sight where there is weakness, breeds variety of judgement; and where there is variety of judgement, there will be jealousies even among good persons, and these are irksome to the spirit of God in any that love the sweet peace and concord of christians, that are contracted to Christ: this will not be avoided in this world; only those that are wise and strongest in grace, they will be the greatest peacemakers, and bear with the weak in this kind.

5. Then again, while we are in this world, there is not the best thing but satan will put his foot and claw in, except grace overpower him. The magistracy, and ministry, alas how are they many times prophaned and abused by satan and corrupt hearted men, that know not how to manage them graciously, and fruitfully? The magistracy that is for good, it is turned oftimes for grievance, as if all the world were made for them, and they to do nothing but to have others idolize them. And then for the ministry, those that should be teachers of others, many times

times diſcourage thoſe whom they ſhould cheriſh: and as the prophet complains in his time of the falſe prophets, they diſcourage thoſe that they ſhould encourage, and ſtrengthen the hands of the wicked, and grieve thoſe that God doth not grieve, by their falſe carriage, taking contrary ways to God's ſpirit. They grieve thoſe that they ſhould cheriſh and comfort, and ſtrengthen the hearts of thoſe that they ſhould take down, by flattery and falſe applications. This will be to the end of the world (notwithſtanding the excellent ordinance of God, by which God works his own good ends). While the world ſtands, there will be a taint upon God's ordinance till Chriſt come; and then all that grieve and offend ſhall be taken away; there ſhall be no ſun nor moon then, for the lamb will do all; there ſhall be no magiſtracy nor miniſtry then—"God will be all in all."

And ſo for all conditions. There is no condition, nor nothing that is good in the world, but ſatan labours to bring a vanity upon it, and the corrupt heart of man is prone to yield to him: this will be to the end of the world. Therefore we ſhould not be overmuch offended, to ſee things carried otherwiſe than we would have them. Why ſhould we wiſh for that condition that will never be in the world? Wiſh we may, but we muſt wiſh it in its own time; it will be hereafter. Let us labour that it may be ſo then, and bear with all here as patiently as we can.

Again, take the beſt chriſtians of all, in themſelves, in their own particulars. Alas! what a conflicting life hath a chriſtian with his own heart? Sometimes, in general, he can ſee truths very clear; but in a particular, ſome paſſion or other, of anger, or revenge, &c. it clouds his judgment, that he cannot ſee what is to be done, what is beſt. The reaſon is, the imperfection of the work of mortification, hinders him in his paſſages and buſineſs, that he cannot clearly decide of what is beſt at this time. St Paul complains of this, that he could not do the good that he would, and that he did the ill that he would not. There are none but they carry ſome of theſe dregs with them in this world, that hinders them in their deſigns and determinations: only, thoſe that have the power of God's ſpirit in a greater portion than the reſt, they get more victory over theſe things, and can more clearly ſee any thing than others. Yet notwithſtanding, all have ſome impediment this way, even the beſt.

6. The neceſſities of this life enforce a great deal of trouble, the

plying the neceſſities of nature, and of the condition that God hath ſet us in, which all ſhall have an end then.

7. Then again, the relation between Chriſt and this contracted ſpouſe, and every faithful ſoul, enforceth a deſire of his coming. It is the time of the church's contract, ſhe is a bride now, ſhe is contracted: now, all the time between the contract and the marriage, it is a time of longing and deſire; therefore the church cannot but deſire the ſecond coming of Chriſt. It is the nature of imperfection, where there is truth in imperfection, to deſire perfection. You ſee the little ſeed that is ſown in the ground, it breaks through the thick clods, becauſe it is not in its perfection, till it be in the ear; nature hath given it an inſtinct to break out. So, where the ſeed of grace is, it will break out and ſhoot forward to deſire ſtill and ſtill, till it comes to perfection. Grace being an imperfect ſtate here, it puts forward in deſiring that perfection which it cannot attain in this world, but in the world to come: therefore the ſpirit and the bride ſay, "Come."

8. And then from the nature of the affection of love itſelf, where it is planted; it is an affection of perfect union, contract will not ſerve, but marriage muſt come after. Love will not ſatisfy itſelf in imperfect union, but it cries, "Come, come," ſtill it is carried in a reſtleſs deſire, till it come to perfection. Therefore, ſuppoſe the Jews were called and converted, and antichriſt ſubdued, hath the church an accompliſhment of the period of her deſires, to ſay no more, "Come?" Oh no: yet Chriſt is not come as he will, there is not a perfect conſummation of all until that of time itſelf—there will be a deſire of the bride and ſpouſe, to ſay, "Come." Thus we ſee what grounds there are of this deſire.

Queſt.—But is this only true of the church militant here below? doth not the church in heaven ſay, Come, too?

Anſ.—Yes, the church in heaven ſaith, Come, too. The church in heaven and earth are but one family; they are, as it were, but one parliament, there is the higher houſe in heaven, and the lower on earth, and both ſay, Come. What is the reaſon that the church in heaven ſaith, Come? Becauſe the church in heaven have bodies that are rotting in earth, which bodies helped them to ſerve God on earth, faſted with them, prayed with them, and endured pains and toil with them. The ſoul

accounts itſelf imperfect, till it be joined to its old companion, the body, again: therefore it deſires, "Come, Lord," that my body may be united to me again, that ſo we may both perfectly praiſe thee in heaven.

Then again, they have not all their company, all the ſaints are not gathered; and they will not be merry indeed, till they all meet in heaven. Therefore that all may meet, even the church in heaven hath a deſire, Come, Lord; ſo both heaven and earth agree in this, they meet in this deſire.

Uſe 1.—This may be a ground of trial, whether we be truly the bride of Chriſt, or no; the ground of the trial may be gathered hence; whither is the bent of our deſire carried? is our condition ſo here, that we deſire to be as we are ſtill? then all is naught with us. The church we ſee ſaith, Come; nothing will content her in this world: ſo thoſe hearts that are wrought upon by the ſpirit of God, nothing here will content them, but ſtill they ſay, Come. The diſpoſition in carnal perſons is quite contrary. They ſay, as it is in Job, "Depart from us, we will none of thy ways;" they are of the mind of the devil, in the goſpel, "Why doſt thou come to torment us before our time?" do not come. If it were in the power of moſt men in the church, whether Chriſt ſhould come to judge the world or no, do you think they would give their advice that way, that Chriſt ſhould come? they would never do it; for they know how unfit a condition they are in for the ſecond coming of Chriſt. If thieves and malefactors might have liberty to chuſe whether there ſhould be aſſizes, or no, ſurely they would never have any. So it is with the men of the world, that live in ſinful wretched courſes, that abuſe their tongues and their bodies; are they of the diſpoſition of the bride, to ſay, Come? Oh no; they know they have not done their duty. Therefore let us enter deeply into our own ſouls, and try whether cordially we can yield this deſire of our hearts, to ſay, Come. Therefore, (to ſpend a little time in a further ſearch), if we can truly ſay, Come, we will deſire Chriſt to come into our ſouls now, to rule our ſouls now, to come and make way for himſelf in our hearts. Is it poſſible for the ſoul to deſire to go to Chriſt, that will not ſuffer him to come to it? If Chriſt rule not in us, we ſhall never reign with Chriſt. If Chriſt's kingdom come not to us, we ſhall never enter into Chriſt's kingdom. Therefore the ſoul that hath this deſire truly, to ſay, Come, it will give Chriſt entrance into it, and

let

let him come by his ordinances. Come, Lord, by thy word, come by thy ſpirit into my heart, cloſe with my heart; drive out whatſoever is there, that will not give thee liberty to reign as thou wilt: theſe deſires will be in a true heart; it will not cheriſh wilfully thoſe deſires that are contrary to this.

Shall we think that that chriſtian who ſaith theſe words in good earneſt, will put Chriſt away in his ordinances, and not care for to hear his word, nor care to meet Chriſt here on earth, and yet pretend a deſire to meet him in heaven? Where is Chriſt here? is he not in his congregations and aſſemblies of his ſaints? Thoſe, therefore, that deſpiſe the ordinances of God, and yet pretend, that they deſire that Chriſt ſhould come, do they not profane the Lord's prayer, when they ſay, "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come?" They mumble it over, they do not mean it in good earneſt. When they deſpiſe the miniſtry and the miniſters, and whatſoever is Chriſt's, deſpiſe the motions of his ſpirit, and will not ſuffer him to rule in their hearts, but are ruled by rules of policy, and reaſon, and fleſh—can they ſay, Come? No, they do abominably profane the Lord's prayer. What kind of ſervice is that, when their deſires are quite contrary? It is a proteſtation contrary to their faith, and therefore it is a nullity. They profeſs in their prayers, that they would have Chriſt to come, and yet their courſe of life is contrary, they would not have him come. Again, thoſe that truly deſire Chriſt ſhould come, they will be ſubordinate helpers under Chriſt, to promote thoſe things that tend to his coming. Before Chriſt comes, antichriſt muſt be aboliſhed and conſumed, the Jews muſt be converted, and the number of the elect muſt be conſummate and finiſhed. Therefore what ſhall we ſay, when thoſe that pretend to deſire the coming of Chriſt, ſhall countenance hereſies that muſt have an end firſt? And thoſe that are againſt wholeſome laws to be made for that end, thoſe that countenance idolatry and falſe worſhip, eſtabliſhing what Chriſt muſt aboliſh before he come, can they ſay, Come, in good earneſt? Their courſe is contrary to what they pray. Therefore indeed, and in good earneſt, we pray, "Thy kingdom come;" and ſay with our ſouls, as the church here, Come, when we ſet ourſelves to aboliſh hereſy and falſe worſhip of God, that is adulterous, and promote the true ſervice of God; when we labour in our places, that the number of the elect may be conſummate; when we labour that our children may be God's children, and that our ſervants may be God's ſervants; and eve-

ry one in our places, labour that the kingdom of Chriſt may be enlarged. If we put not to our helping hand to what we pray for, it is a contradiction. Thoſe therefore that live ſcandalous lives, in ſcandalous courſes and ſpeeches, and hinder the converſion of people's ſouls, and labour to draw them to wicked helliſh courſes; when they poſt to hell themſelves, and labour to draw others into curſed ſociety with themſelves, they cannot truly ſay, as the church here, Come. Let us take it to heart, that we do not mock and dally with religion, it is a greater matter than we take it for. It is impoſſible, but a chriſtian that ſaith his prayers in earneſt, ſhould be thus affected, unleſs we make a mockery of religion.

3. Again, if we can indeed ſay, Come, there will be a fiting for this coming, a preparing ourſelves for it, for our going to Chriſt. Is it not ſo in civil things? And doth not grace work that which nature doth, in a higher degree? If we deſire that a great perſon ſhould come to us, will there not be a fitting up of our houſes, of our apparel, and entertainment ſuitable to the worth of the perſon? or elſe a man may ſay, ſurely you look for nobody this day, there is nothing fitted or prepared. So if we pretend to deſire Chriſt to come, and yet notwithſtanding we are careleſs of getting knowledge, and of purging our ſouls, of growing in grace; careleſs of being ſuch as Chriſt may delight to come unto: this careleſſneſs of fitting and preparing ourſelves, ſhews that we do but in hypocriſy ſpeak the words, when we have no ſuch thing in our hearts. Thoſe that deſire the kingdom of Chriſt, and the happy condition of chriſtians in another world, they deſire the way of it here, that is, by fitting and preparing themſelves for that eſtate; and indeed it will work theſe effects, as it is in Tit. ii. and other places. What is the motive there to live a holy, and righteous and ſober life? "Looking, and waiting for the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt." There he inſerts a holy life between the two comings of Chriſt, ſhewing that the believing the end of both, will work this effect in the change of our lives, "To be ſober ourſelves, and juſt to others, and holy to God." The grace of God hath appeared, that is, in the firſt coming of Chriſt, "teaching us to deny all ungodlineſs, and worldly luſts," &c. and then looking forward ſtill for the ſecond coming of Chriſt. So that he believes, that the grace of God hath appeared in ſaving our ſouls by the death of Chriſt in his firſt coming; and he who believes that he will come to be glorious after in his

his ſecond coming; certainly he will live juſtly and ſoberly, and righteouſly, in this preſent world, he will fit himſelf for that eſtate which he profeſſeth to deſire. Let us try ourſelves by theſe evidences in ſome meaſure, and not think our ſtate good till we can ſay from our hearts, Come.

Queſt.—But are chriſtians always in this ſtate of ſoul, that they can ſay, Come?

Anſ.—They are always in ſome degree fitting themſelves for Chriſt; but notwithſtanding, they are not always ſo exact and watchful, that they could wiſh, that he ſhould come at this time. Take the compariſon from a wife, a ſpouſe; ſhe heartily deſires the coming home of her huſband: yet perhaps ſometimes things may not be in ſo good order as to wiſh that he were here now; nay, I am not yet prepared. This is the ſtate of careleſs chriſtians, that have ſoundneſs of grace, and yet are careleſs; they deſire the coming of Chriſt, and they love the glory of the life to come, and endeavour weakly for it; yet they are ſo careleſs, ſome corruption hangs on them, that they are not ſo mortified and ſubdued as they ſhould be; they are not yet ſo fitted as they ſhould be. Therefore God often rouſeth ſuch by afflictions, and other courſes in this world, to wean them more from the love of the world, and to prepare us, becauſe we are ſlothful, and careleſs to prepare ourſelves. So, I ſay, that ſometimes the beſt chriſtians may be at times more indiſpoſed than at others, by reaſon of ſecurity growing on our ſouls, ſo weak are we, and beſet with temptations: therefore let none be overmuch diſcouraged with that; but let us ſtrive as the church here, to be in ſuch an eſtate, as we may always ſay, Come.

Well, upon trial, if we find ourſelves not ſo diſpoſed as we ſhould, How ſhall we carry ourſelves that we may ſay, Come?

Uſe.—1. Let us labour to purge ourſelves by mortification more and more; he that hath this hope purgeth himſelf. And let us endure God's purging of us by afflictions; and think that God hath this aim, Certainly, this is to make me more heavenly minded, to raiſe my affections up. I will therefore bear the anger of God, I have deſerved it, and he hath holy ends in it to make me partaker of his righteouſneſs. Let us purge ourſelves by grace, and endure the courſe that God takes to purge us by daily croſſes; for God aims by it to wean us more and more from the world.

2. And let us labour daily more and more to unlooſe our hearts from the things below. Thoſe that would remove a tree, they looſe it from the root; ſo our affections are rooted to earthly things, therefore we ſhould labour to looſe them daily more and more, by the conſideration of the uncertainty and vanity of all things: they are not that which will ſtick to us, and give us content when we ſtand in moſt need of it: here we muſt leave the things of this world; as we find them here, we muſt part with them. Therefore we ſhould labour to unlooſe our hearts, and to plant, and ſet, and pitch them where they may be ſafe, and ſwallowed up in better things.

3. And to this end, often meditate on the excellency that ſhall be at the ſecond coming of Chriſt. Oh, the glorious time then! See the means how the church comes to be ſtirred up here, to ſay, Come. Chriſt ſaith before, that he was the root of David, the bright morning ſtar. He ſets out himſelf glorioufly, and the glorioufneſs of that time: then the church, hearing what the excellency of that ſtate will be then, and the excellency of Chriſt, the church hath deſires ſuitable to thoſe manifeſtations. Therefore let us meditate of the ſtate of the church, what it will be, and of the excellency and glory of Chriſt, when he ſhall come to be glorious in his ſaints, what a happy condition it will be; and, to feed our meditations, let us be often hearing and reading of theſe things, if we hope for any thing to come in this world: as if a young heir that ſhall have great poſſeſſions, the more he grows towards years, the more he thinks, I ſhall have this eſtate, and that—he thinks of the poſſeſſions he hath; ſo a chriſtian, the nearer he grows to heaven, the more he thinks upon, and talks, and is willing to hear of that condition which he ſhall have. The more we are in meditation, and to help meditation, the more we are in thinking and ſpeaking, and conferring of the things that will befal us ere long, if we be God's, the more our affections will be raiſed up, as we ſee in the ſpouſe here: upon the manifeſtation of the excellency of Chriſt, comes this deſire after the coming of Chriſt. This is one reaſon of the deadneſs of our hearts, we do not awaken them with ſuch holy thoughts as we ſhould, and we are not under thoſe means we might oftentimes. There cannot be any thing more ſweet and powerful, to draw up our ſouls, than meditation in this kind.

4. Again, that we may be able to ſay, Come, let us labour to

to be more and more ſpiritual; that the holy Spirit may rule our ſpirits; and then the ſpirit is always for Come. Nature ſaith not Come, becauſe it is above nature. It is a hidden ſecret to nature. Nature ſaith, ſtay ſtill; it hath no deſire to it, the fleſh is contrary altogether: but the ſpirit, in the ſpouſe, ſaith, Come. The ſpirit doth all, as the ſoul doth all in the body; it acts it, and leads it, and comforts, and gives beauty to it; ſo the ſpirit firſt knits Chriſt and us together. There is the ſame ſpirit in Chriſt the head, and in the church, there is one common ſpirit in head and members. And when it hath done, ſo it acts, and leads, and ſanctifies, and purifies the church, it acquaints the church with the good things God hath given her, acquaints her with the deep meaning of God; the love of God in Chriſt, it acquaints God with our deſires, he knows our meaning in our prayers, and we know his meaning; it acquaints us with the ſtate which we ſhall have after, and aſſures us of it: it is the earneſt of the inheritance; the ſpirit and the graces of it, are not only the earneſt, but a part of that inheritance, a part of heaven, where our bodies ſhall be ſpiritual; not that they ſhall turn to be ſpirits, but they ſhall be ruled wholly by the ſpirit, as the ſoul rules the body.

As it is in a river, it is impoſſible that the ſtream ſhould run higher than the ſpring-head from whence it comes; ſo it is impoſſible that our deſires ſhould run higher than the ſpring from whence they come. The deſires of nature cannot go higher than nature; the deſires of the ſpirit are fleſhly; but ſpiritual deſires, as they ſpring from heaven, they have a noble original and head, ſo they carry to heaven again. Therefore, as the ſpirit comes from God the Father, and the Son, ſo it carries us back again to the Father and the Son; as it comes from heaven, ſo it carries to heaven back again. That is one way to know whether our deſires be ſpiritual or not; our deſire of death, and the coming of Chriſt, if it be from weariſomneſs of life, and from afflictions in the world, ſo nature may deſire. It were better to be dead than to be thus; as Jonah wiſhed death, and the children of Iſrael, and Elias, in a paſſion, "Oh that I were dead," &c. but if thoſe deſires ſpring from the ſpirit, then they come from heaven, from the conſideration of the excellency of the ſtate we ſhall have there, that it ſhall be better with us, and that death is but a dark paſſage to a glorious condition. We may know our deſires are ſpiritual from the riſe of them, if they come from ſpiritual, and holy, and heavenly conſiderations: the ſpirit doth all in the ſpouſe that is holy and ſpiritual.

Therefore let us give entertainment to the ſpirit of God, and be where we may have further and further communion with the ſpirit in ſpiritual ordinances. The preaching of God's holy word, (though it be meanly eſteemed by the world) it is the miniſtry of the ſpirit; in the hearing of it, the ſpirit is given: if we would have the ſpirit, let us attend upon the miniſtry of the ſpirit. And let us ſtudy Chriſt, and make him all and all. St. Paul queſtions with the Galatians, ſaith he, I would know of you, "how came ye by the ſpirit? by hearing of Chriſt's goſpel, or of the law preached?" No, it was by the goſpel: ſo that not only the miniſtry in general, but the evangelical miniſtry that unfolds Chriſt, and the infinite love of God in Chriſt, the excellent condition we have in this world, and look for the world to come. The ſpirit is effectual with theſe thoughts to make us holy and heavenly. The law beats down; but the goſpel, eſpecially theſe evangelical truths, make us ſpiritual. Therefore we ſhould be willing to hear ſpiritual points. There are a company of men, that love to hear curious and nice points, and if a miniſter be quaint, and ſatyrical, and unfold points ſuitable to their apprehenſion, they can digeſt this: but come to ſpeak of things above nature, of Chriſt, and the benefits by him; they are ſpiritual, they are remote, and tranſcendent above their nature, that they cannot reliſh them. But he that hath the ſpirit of Chriſt, of all points, there are none like thoſe that unfold Chriſt, and the benefits by him, the glory that we hope for by him in another world.

And let us not grieve the ſpirit, but give way to his motions. The ſpirit is now among us in his ordinances, knocking at our hearts, and deſiring entertainment: let us give way, and not quench the good motions that he ſtirs up, and the ſpirit ſhall be given more and more to us; "The Holy-Ghoſt is given to them that obey him." And let us beg the ſpirit, God "will give his holy ſpirit to them that aſk him," Luke. xi. As if he ſhould ſay, the ſpirit is the beſt thing God can give; you that are evil, can give "good things to your children:" but your heavenly Father hath one good thing inſtead of all, he will give his ſpirit. Therefore, when we find our hearts dead, and dull, and earthly, and baſe-minded, think thus: Alas, I am a lump of fleſh now, where is the ſpirit of God? certainly if I had the ſpirit in me, I could not be as I am. If we love our ſouls, we will take this courſe, we trifle with religion elſe. God doth all by the ſpirit, the ſpirit is Chriſt's vicar: here is no need of a miniſterial head between

between the ſpouſe and Chriſt, the ſpirit and the ſpouſe are ſo near together: there is ſuch a conjunction between Chriſt and his church, that where the ſpirit is; he ſtirs up deſires of his coming. Only let us attend upon the means, and ordinances, that he hath left in the church. And let us conſider we are not for this life; we are not to live here always: the child in the womb is not for that life, and when it is in the world, it is not for this life; there is a third life that we are for. An imperfect ſtate reſts not till it come to perfection: our beſt is behind: let thoſe that are naught, fear the ſecond coming of Chriſt. Let Herod, and Judas, and the beaſt of Rome fear, that ſhall "be caſt into the burning lake." Let Felix tremble, the corrupt judge, and all that live in corrupt courſes. But we that profeſs ourſelves to be chriſtians, and hope for better things in another world, let us labour to baniſh baſe fears: and to this end, let us labour to be ſpiritual, and not to be led by the fleſh. "Whoſoever is Chriſt's hath the ſpirit of Chriſt, or elſe he is none of his," as it is ſweetly, and largely, and heavenly proved, Rom. viii. We have nothing to do with Chriſt, unleſs we have his ſpirit, to ſtir up motions, and deſires of better things than this world can afford.

THE

THE

SPIRITUAL MAN'S AIM;

Guiding a Christian, in his Affections and Actions, through sundry Passages of this Life.

---

1 COR. vii. 29, 30, 31.

"*It remaineth, brethren, the time is ſhort, let thoſe that have wives,*
"*be as if they had none.*
"*And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that re-*
"*joice, as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy, as though*
"*they poſſeſſed not;*
"*And they that uſe this world, as not abuſing it, for the faſhion of*
"*this world paſſeth away.*"

THE bleſſed apoſtle, in the former part of this chapter, had given direction in caſes of conſcience, being a man that had the tongue of the learned to ſpeak a word in ſeaſon to the weary: whereupon, (having in his eye greater matters), as his uſe is in almoſt every epiſtle, he calls them from particular caſes, that they ſhould not overmuch trouble themſelves about them, but mind the main. "The time is ſhort, let thoſe that are married, be as if they were not," &c. But yet notwithſtanding, he gives ſatisfaction to the particular caſes; for, as in travelling, it is not enough to know that a man's way lies eaſt, or weſt, or north, or ſouth, but he muſt know the turnings and windings, the particulars of the way: So, in religion, it is not enough to know that we muſt ſerve God above all, and love our neighbour

as

as ourſelves, &c. Theſe generalities atheiſts will embrace; and, in pretence of them, ſhake off all further ſtudy of religion. Our knowledge muſt ſtand in clearing particular caſes alſo, which being cleared, the way is ſmoother to heaven-ward; yet notwithſtanding, we muſt not dwell too much on particulars, for here you ſee the apoſtle calls them off—"Finally, my brethren, the time is ſhort," it remains that we look to the main, &c. "For the faſhion of this world paſſeth away;" wherein we ſhall conſider two points in general, which I will only name, and haſten to that which followeth.

The firſt is this, that "A very good way to ſatisfy caſes of conſcience in particular, is to have in our mind the main."

For there be many that puzzle themſelves all their life about this and that particular, and forget the main in the mean time. Let a man look to the main, and he will ſoon reſolve in ſuch particulars as theſe.

Whether it be good to redeem time, to hear a ſermon now and then; he will do the thing, and not ſtand making a caſe of it; for when he conſiders how it helps to the main, the ſaving of his ſoul, &c. for which he came into the world, he will eaſily be reſolved.

And ſo for ſanctifying the Lord's day entirely, many have ſcruples, and keep ado; but if they had the love of God in their ſouls, and did look to the main, they would ſee it to be an idle queſtion; for how much conduceth it to the main?

And ſo for converſing with company—are they ſuch as are comfortable and cheerful? are they ſuch as we may profit by? No, why do I entangle myſelf, and hinder the main? So we ſee Paul, in reſolving the particulars, he calls them to the main. "Brethren, the time is ſhort;" therefore be in theſe things as if ye were not, (as we ſhall ſee preſently in the particulars), "For the faſhion of this world paſſeth away." This is the reaſon why none but a true chriſtian can carry himſelf moderately in the things of this world, why? becauſe none but a ſound chriſtian hath a main and a chief end, that ſways the ſtern of his whole life; he looks to heaven and happineſs, and how it ſhall be with him afterwards; and he conſiders particulars therefore, when another man of neceſſity, muſt err in particular caſes, becauſe he hath not a gracious aim. You have no

man

man but a chriſtian, but he loſeth himſelf in the things of this world.

The ſecond thing is this, you may ſee that "Religion meddles with all matters."

With the world, with marriage, with buying and poſſeſſing, as we ſhall ſee afterwards. Saith an atheiſt, (that grudges that his ways ſhould be hindered by that commanding ſkill of religion which hath to do in all things), What hath the miniſter to do with our callings, with lawyers, with tradeſmen, or ſtateſmen? What hath the miniſter to do with theſe things?

It is true, not with the materials, with the particular matters of thoſe callings; that is left to thoſe that are artiſts, that have skill in the particulars of their profeſſions in each kind; but a miniſter hath to deal with theſe things, as they help to further the main; religion is a skill that fits a man for a further end, for his laſt end, for heaven. Now, being ſuch a skill, it muſt direct every thing ſo far as it helps or hinders that.—State knowledge, we ſay, is a commanding knowledge. Why? becauſe it meddles with all trades. How? hath a ſtateſman skill in this or that trade? No, not in the particular myſtery; but he hath skill ſo far as he ſees what may ſerve for public good. Let the ſafety of the commonwealth be the law of all trades. The ſtate knowledge is the ſupreme knowledge, which is for the good of the whole; therefore it cuts off particulars, if they be miſchievous to the whole. So all trades muſt be told of their faults, as they are blemiſhes to religion; for we muſt not be ſo in this or that trade, ſo as to forget we are chriſtians; and therefore we muſt hear meekly the word of God, when it meets with our particular callings. We ſee Paul meddleth with buying and ſelling, with marriage, &c. How? as far as they might hinder the main. "Finally, my brethren, the time is ſhort, and the faſhion of this world paſſeth away." Therefore be not over-much in theſe things.

It is the ſupreme reaſon, the main reaſon that makes for religion, as I ſaid before of ſtate knowledge. There is a ſupreme law; yet though that be ſupreme in regard of inferiors, there is one above that. That is the chief law, the chief reaſon of all that makes for religion; there be many particular reaſons that make for this and that, ay, but religion ſaith the contrary; and then that muſt rule, that is the ſupreme. Now, I come

to

to unfold the particulars. The apoſtle here ſtands upon five directions; and bounds thoſe five directions with three reaſons.

1. *Let thoſe that are married, be as if they were not.*
2. *Thoſe that weep, as if they wept not.*
3. *Thoſe that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not.*
4. *And they that buy, as though they poſſeſſed not.*
5. *And they that uſe this world, as not abuſing it.*

How are theſe five directions enforced? They are enforced from three reaſons.

The firſt is in the front of the text. "The time is ſhort." Therefore be moderate in all things here.

The ſecond is in the ſhutting up of the text. "For the faſhion of this world paſſeth away."

The third reaſon is a main reaſon too: that is from their ſtate and condition in Chriſt. Why "Brethren (ſaith he) partakers of the heavenly calling," as he ſaith in another place, "partakers of better things;" and by being brethren, brethren in Chriſt, members of Chriſt; he is the knot of the brotherhood, being born again ſons of God, brethren of Chriſt; not brethren only among yourſelves, but brethren in Chriſt, and ſo ſons of God, and heirs of heaven. What? for you to be immoderate in the things of the world? Paul wraps up a moving reaſon, not only to inſinuate and gain their affection, "Oh, my brethren!" but to add a force of reaſon likewiſe. "Brethren, the time is ſhort;" and, "brethren, the faſhion of this world paſſeth away." So add theſe three reaſons to the five directions, and ſee how ſtrongly Paul backs his directions. Indeed it was needful for Paul ſo to do; we are ſo deſperately ſet on the things of this world, we are ſo hardly taken off, that there muſt be reaſon upon reaſon; for the Holy Ghoſt, the holy ſpirit, loves not waſte of reaſons, to ſpend them where there is no uſe. And therefore we muſt think it a weighty point, and of great importance, that we give ear to theſe directions.

We muſt remember that every one of theſe reaſons has a force in every direction: "you that have wives, be as if you had none," for, "the time is ſhort, and the faſhion of this world paſſeth away." And ſo, you that weep, as if you wept not, for the time is ſhort, and the faſhion of the world paſſeth away. And you are brethren, you that uſe the world

as

as not abuſing it—for the time is ſhort, and the faſhion of this world paſſeth away. So that all theſe reaſons muſt be thought on in every particular direction, that I ſpeak of; only in general, I will ſpeak a little of the firſt reaſon, "The time is ſhort."

What time?

The time of the world; there is but a little time before the day of judgment. Chriſt is at hand to judge the quick and the dead. The time between this and that is ſhort, it was ſhort then, it is ſhorter now. "The time is ſhort;" we are fallen into the latter end of the world: but that is not all.

2. The time is ſhort of our little world, our particular judgement is near at hand: it ſhall be with us at the laſt day, as it is when we die; our time is ſhort, the time of our particular life is ſhort; and that is more forcible to perſuade us, "The time is ſhort."

3. The ſeaſon of the time, which is the prime time: The ſeaſon and opportunity of time is ſhorter than the time of life; for we have not opportunity of time all our life. 1. The time is ſhort: that is, the advantage of doing good, and taking of good, is ſhort. All the year is not harveſt, or ſeed-time; it is not always tide, it is not always ſunſhine; and, as it is in nature, ſo it is in the ſpiritual ſtate of things. We have not always advantages and opportunities, we have not always gales. Opportunity therefore is ſhorter than time, as our time is ſhorter than the time of the world. "The time is ſhort." The opportunity and ſeaſon of time is ſhorter—it is ſhort.

2. It is alſo uncertain—we cannot tell how ſhort. If it were told any of us here, that within two days he ſhall die, it would ſtartle us, the beſt of us all; it would make us look about us. But who of us all knows certainly that he ſhall live two hours? The time, as it is ſhort, ſo it is uncertain. And here is the wondrous folly of our nature, that we will take ſo much time to come in truſt, as tho' we ſhould live ſo long, and make a covenant with death. But one party cannot make a covenant; God and the time to come make no covenant with us. Therefore, it is extremity of folly to ſay, I will live ſo long, and ſo long.—Thou fool, ſaith God, when he projected for a long time, and had treaſure laid up for many years, "Thou fool, this night they ſhall take thy ſoul." A man is a fool when he makes account

count of continuing that he hath no promiſe of. And therefore, the time being ſhort and uncertain too, take it while we may catch hold of it, eſpecially the opportunity of time.

And then, in the third place, it is irrecoverable, when it is gone—there is no recalling back of time, when it is paſt. In all theſe reſpects, we muſt be good huſbands, we muſt be thrifty of our time; and not take care how to drive away that which flies away of itſelf too faſt: it is a precious thing, precious for great purpoſes. What is this little time given us for? to provide for eternity world without end; and we trifle it away about this thing, and that thing, to no purpoſe; we fill it up with vanity, which is bad, and with ſin, which is worſe. In this little time, we do that which, in a long time after, we cannot undo again. That is our madneſs and folly. Therefore, "the time is ſhort," let us take heed what we do in it; we may do that in a little time, which we may rue for eternity: we may do that good, and get that good, in a little time, that may ſtand by us world without end. Thoſe that have but a little plot of ground, will husband it ſo as not to loſe a handful of it; ſo thoſe that have but a little time, let them husband it well. Sow to the ſpirit, that our harveſt may be eternal life, that we may ſay, Oh! it was a great bleſſing that God gave me a little time to get into Chriſt, to repent of my ſins, &c.

Beloved, there are three main parts of this little time, paſt, preſent, and to come.

1. The time that is gone; let us repent of it, if it has not been ſpent well; that is the beſt uſe we can make of the time paſt; for there is nothing to be done in the time that is paſt. But if things have been done ill, repent.

2. The time preſent is to do good in; and, for the time to come, it is out of our power; and therefore, even for the preſent, we muſt work. The time paſt, the beſt uſe we can make of it is, to comfort ourſelves, as Hezekiah, in our ſincerity, or to repent if any thing have been done amiſs; but look to the preſent, put not off; do the work for which we came into the world preſently; the time is ſhort, the journey is long, the buſineſs is great; it is a great journey from earth to heaven; it is a great matter to get heaven.

Now, having ſuch buſineſs as to go to heaven, let us, I beſeech you, conſider the weight of the buſineſs, and give our eyes no ſleep,

ſleep, nor our eye-lids ſlumber, till we are gotten into ſuch a ſtate and condition, as is not liable to time; let us make this ſpecial uſe of precious time. Thoſe that are young, let them be adviſed to take time along with them, (which is to be eſteemed far above gold), and conſecrate the flower of their time to God, and to the beſt things, eſpecially conſidering, that we have no aſſurance of this time. And thoſe that are old, that through age are going into the grave, let them not neglect their time. A young man, as we ſay, may die ſoon, an old man cannot live long. And therefore, let thoſe that are ſtricken in years, be put in mind to think that their time is ſhorter than others. All men's times are ſhort, old men's ſhorteſt. Let thoſe therefore think of this, "The time is ſhort." Our folly is this, we make it ſhorter than it is, by our vanity: Vanity! it were well if it were only vanity. By ſinful and intemperate courſes many ſhorten their days, and ſo are criminals upon themſelves; or, by their wickedneſs, they give God occaſion to ſhorten them. "A blood-thirſty and cruel man ſhall not live half his days;" God meets with him. So the time is ſhort, and we make it ſhorter; we are guilty of the ſhortneſs of it—let us take heed of that. But I have been too long on this point, only becauſe it is the prime reaſon ſet before all the particulars. I beſeech you, conſider, the time is ſhort. If we do not make uſe of it, we are worſe than the devil himſelf; he makes uſe of the ſhortneſs of his time: What doth he? Becauſe the time is ſhort, he doth all the miſchief he can; he fills up his time to increaſe his kingdom, he doth all the miſchief he can, for this reaſon, becauſe his time is ſhort. Let us learn ſomewhat of the worſt of ſpirits. But that which it ſerves for in particular here, is this: We have many things to do, and the time being ſhort, let us be ſure we do the main thing that we came for, and other things as they help the main, and not hinder it. The time is ſhort, and we have many buſineſſes to do. Let us be ſure that we do our buſineſs ſo, as that we leave not the main undone. That is the thing he aims at here—"The time is ſhort."

It remains that thoſe that have wives, be as if they had none.

That is the firſt particular; for, before they had aſked him caſes of conſcience about marriage, and that makes him ſpeak of it. All the particulars have dependence one upon another. Thoſe that marry will have occaſion to weep; that is next, for there will be cauſe: There will be loſs of huſband, or wife,

or

or child; and there is always ſome family croſſes attending upon marriage. And therefore he adds weeping after marriage.

And then joy, becauſe there is joy. "A woman brings forth in ſorrow, but ſhe joys when a man-child is born," as Chriſt ſpeaks. There is joy in children, and there is mutual joy in that ſweet conjugal friendſhip, there is much joy: and therefore as there is weeping, ſo there is joy in marriage.

"And thoſe that buy, as if they poſſeſſed not." There muſt be buying where there is wife and children, there muſt be looking to poſterity: and then all this enforceth, "uſing of the world." And men, when they enter into that ſtate, they enter into the world, as we uſe to ſay, they begin the world anew. Therefore we ſee one thing depends upon another, aiming eſpecially at one thing, at that kind of life, marriage eſtate.

Now, in every one of thoſe particulars, he gives a liberty to do the thing; you may marry, you may weep, you may joy, you may uſe the world; but as there is a liberty, ſo there is alſo a danger; you may, but you may not go too far. And therefore, with a liberty, he gives a reſtraint. Do them, but take heed you over-do them not. And this reſtraint is backed with reaſon; he hath reaſon for this reſtraint. "The time is ſhort;" and therefore there is danger leſt you ſhoot yourſelves too far, leſt you paſs too deep into theſe things. "And the faſhion of this world paſſeth away," all things here paſs away. Therefore it is in vain for you to be overmuch in thoſe things, that are paſſing things.

And then, you are brethren called to greater matters; ſo there is a liberty, a danger, and a reſtraint upon the danger, and likewiſe a reaſon to back it in every particular.

The liberty. 1. We may marry, is not queſtioned. There is not only a liberty, but it is an honourable eſtate and neceſſary; honoured in paradiſe, honoured by Chriſt's preſence. A liberty by which the church is upheld, heaven is increaſed. It was the devil that brought in a baſe eſteem of that honourable condition. In popery, they will rather be the member of an harlot, than the head of a wife. It was the devil that brought in thoſe abominable opinions and writings, to diſparage that honourable condition, and ſo it muſt be thought.

2. But there is a danger, and that is the main thing. You

" that have wives, be as if you had none." There is a great danger in a double reſpect. A danger in the things, and a peril if we go too far in them. That is, there is a great hazard, that we ſhall go too far in that condition, and the danger that it tends to.

For inſtance, thoſe that have wives, have they not been drawn away by their wives, as Solomon was to idolatry? Is there not a danger of being drawn away? and, in being drawn away, is there no hazard to our ſouls? Did not ſin come in that way? Was not Adam led away by his wife? and how many men periſh, by being too uxorious, by being too flexible in that kind? If they had remembered the apoſtle's precept, to marry as if they had not, they would not have been ſo drawn away. Becauſe there is a danger, there is a reſtraint, " Let thoſe that have wives, be as though they had none." What! to uſe them as if they had none? to care for them as if they had none? No, that is not the meaning; " but to be as if they had none;" that is, let them be as reſolute for God's truth, as if they had no wives to hinder them; let them be as willing to ſuffer croſſes, if God call them, as if they had none. Let them be as ready to good duties, if they fall within their calling, as if they had none. Let them avoid diſtracting cares, and worldly incumbrances, as if they had none. Let them not pretend their marriage for their baſeneſs and worldlineſs, and for avoiding croſſes and afflictions, when God is pleaſed to call them unto them. Let them not pretend marriage for their doubting in religion and diſſembling, I ſhall undo my wife and children—let them be as if they had none; for Chriſt hath given us directions to hate all for him.—A man is not worthy of Chriſt, and of religion, that undervalues not wife and children, and all, for the goſpel. If things ſtand in queſtion, whether ſhall I ſtand to them, or Chriſt, my chief huſband? I muſt ſtick to Chriſt; the reaſon is, the bond of religion is above all bonds. And the bond that binds us to Chriſt, it abides when all bonds ceaſe; for all bonds between husband and wife, between father and children, they end in death; but the bond of Chriſt is eternal. Every bond muſt ſerve the main bond; and therefore we muſt not pretend this and that, to wrong Chriſt and religion, which is the main bond. We muſt ſo labour to pleaſe others, that we diſpleaſe not our chief huſband. For the time will be, when we ſhall neither marry, nor be given in marriage, but we ſhall be as the angels: and that ſhall be without bounds and limits for eternity, and we muſt look

look to that. And therefore thoſe that marry, let them be as if they were not married. You know how it fared with him in the goſpel, that pretended this for his not coming to Chriſt; he that was married, ſaith, "I cannot come," he could not, his excuſe was more peremptory than the reſt, he could not. Could not this excuſe him? and will pretending this, excuſe men when they are called to duties? There is that diſproportion between Chriſt, our chief husband, and any other, though it be the wife of our boſom, or the children of our loins, (the one having redeemed us, and is our beſt husband, a husband for eternity in heaven), that no excuſe will ſerve the turn for a man to wrong the bond of religion for any bond whatſoever. And therefore you know the peremptory anſwer to him that pretended that excuſe, "You ſhall never taſte of my feaſt."

And thoſe that wept, as though they wept not.

It is lawful to weep, not only for ſin, (that ſhould be the main), but likewiſe to weep for the miſeries of the time and ſtate we live in. There is a liberty here. "Oh! that my head were a fountain of waters," ſaith Jeremiah. He thought he could not weep enough, and therefore he wiſheth that his head were a fountain; he thought that his tears would ſoon be dry—"Oh! that my head were a fountain;" ſo that there is a liberty to weep, nay, men are bound to weep. There are tears of ſympathy for the miſery of the ſtate and time we live in. And ſo for family loſſes and croſſes; we are fleſh, and not ſpirit; and God hath made us men, and hath given us ſenſible apprehenſions of grief; and, it is a curſed temper to be without natural affection. We may weep, and we may grieve, nay, we ought to grieve.

Now grief is, as it were, a cloud, from whence the ſhower of tears comes; and weeping is but a diſtillation of that vapour.

If we may grieve, and ought to grieve for the times; then it is a ſtupid temper, not to apprehend the miſeries of the ſtate, and times we live in. If we may grieve, we may weep; that is, put forth the ſpring whence weeping comes. For grief itſelf, there is a liberty, no queſtion of that; we may weep, but we muſt weep as if we wept not. For there is a danger in weeping over much for any croſſes. Here is a danger, for we may flatter our grief too much for wives or children. God takes it ill, he takes it unkindly, that when Chriſt himſelf is a

perpetual husband, and God is an everlasting Father, that we should weep and grieve too much, for the loss of father, or of wife, or of child. For is not God worth all? So there is a danger, that naturally we are prone to over-grieve, when we do grieve, as we are to overjoy when we do joy. For our nature can hardly keep bounds; and God takes it unkindly when we do so, when we overgrieve; for it is a sign we fetch not that comfort from him, who is the spring and fountain, that we should do. And therefore let those that weep, be as if they wept not; that is, not overmuch. "For the time is short:" dost thou lose any friend, or any thing? the time is short, we shall meet again. There is but a little time between this and the latter judgment, "and the fashion of this world passeth away." There will be a new world, a new heaven, and a new earth; and then we shall live for ever with the Lord.

And then, "my brethren." Why? Brethren should not be without hope of the resurrection, as the Gentiles are. They may weep that never think to see one another again. But a christian, a brother, that hath a hope of meeting again, let him not weep as without hope, but as if he wept not. So he lays a restraint upon that; nay, though our weeping be for sin, there must be a moderation in that; for we may over-grieve—we are bound to joy in the Lord, and always to rejoice. And therefore we must weep for sin, so as we must remember to joy. We must with one eye look upon our sins to humble us, and to work upon our hearts to grieve; but with the other eye, we must look upon God's mercy in Christ, to comfort us again. The best grief of all, that must be moderate, much more grief for any earthly thing.

Now, whenever we are tempted to over-grieve for any earthly thing, the best way is to consider, Do I grieve for these? ay, but is my soul as it should be? Let me weep over my dead soul, as Christ wept over Lazarus, when he was dead. Let me weep over my dull soul, let me weep over that.

As physicians, when the blood runs too much one way, they give an issue another way: so let us turn our grief the right way. How is it with us, is the life of grace in our hearts? Is reckonings even between God and my soul? Am I fit to end my days? Am I in a state fit for heaven? Then we shall weep for something. It is a pity such pearls as tears should be lost. God hath no bottles

bottles for tears that are ſhed over-much for the things of the world. But if they be for our ſins, and the ſins of the time we live in, and for the evils and miſeries of the ſtate, that are on us, and hang over our heads, then let us weep to purpoſe; turn our grief the right way, and then let us grieve amain, if we will, only let our grief run in that channel.

Thoſe that joy, as if they did not.

Joy we may, and we ought, for God envies not our joy; he hath given us wherewith in this life to joy, abundance of comforts of all ſorts, for all our ſenſes, flowers, colours, &c. We have nothing in ſoul or body, but it hath objects to delight in. God hath made himſelf for the ſoul to delight it, and there is ſomewhat to delight us in every creature, ſo ſweet is God; we may, and ought to rejoice. God gives us wives and children to rejoice in. "Rejoice in the wife of thy youth." There is no queſtion of a liberty in theſe things.

But then there is a danger; eſpecially in ſweet affections. There is a danger, becauſe we are like to over-joy. There is a danger, therefore there muſt be a reſtraint. "We muſt joy, as if we rejoiced not:" that is, ſo joy in any thing here, as conſidering that the time is ſhort, I cannot enjoy it long. Shall I joy in that I cannot enjoy? The time is ſhort, I cannot enjoy them. The time is ſhort, you muſt go, the things muſt go, both muſt go; and the faſhion of this world paſſeth away. All the frame of things paſſeth away; marriage paſſeth away; and callings paſs away; and all paſs away; and friends paſs away, and all paſs away. I beſeech you let us learn to joy, as if we rejoiced not. The prophet calls Nineveh, a rejoicing city. And we live in a jovial age. Men eat and drink as they did in the days of the old world, in Noah's time: they marry, and give in marriage. And therefore we had need to lay ſome reſtraint upon our joy, eſpecially when God calls us to mourning as well as joy, as he doth, if we look round about us. If we look upon the times, we ſhall ſee cauſe to joy as if we did not. We muſt not always be on the merry pin, as we ſay, but we muſt temper and qualify our joy.

Now, conſidering that the apoſtle adds, weeping, grieving, and joy, you ſee, that

Religion is especially necessary in moderating the affections.

Religion is purging the affections from the evil that is in them, and moderating them, if they be lawful and good. And therefore think not that you are religious enough, if you know a great deal, as many christians are very greedy of knowing. And yet if you look to their lives, their grief and their joy is intemperate they have not learned to bridle and to school their affections. You see that religion is in moderating of grief and joy in earthly things: Let us see men shew the power of religion in bearing of crosses, so that they weep as if they wept not: and in bearing prosperity, so as they can learn to abound, to joy, as if they rejoiced not. That man hath learned religion to purpose. Religion is especially about the affections, for we are good if we joy well, and grieve well, but not, if we know much. The devil knoweth more than we. Therefore especially labour, that God would vouchsafe grace to govern the affections, that we may know how to grieve, and how to joy, as naturally indeed we do not.

And then, we see here another point, (which now I add), that,

The affections of God's people are mixed.

They so weep, as that it is mingled with joy, and their joy is mingled with weeping. "They weep as if they wept not, they joy, as if they joyed not."

A carnal man is in extremes altogether; if he joy, he thrusts the house out of the window, as we say. If he be merry, he is mad, he hath no bounds. If he be sorrowful, if somewhat restrain him not, he sinks like a beast under his sorrow, as Nabal did, for he hath no grace to temper his sorrow, and to temper his joy. And therefore he is over sorrowful, or over jocund. Ah! but grace (considering that we have objects of both), doth temper the affections of both. A christian when he joys, he doth not overjoy, for he hath cause at that time to mourn for somewhat: and, when he grieves, he doth not over-grieve, for he hath somewhat then to joy in; for Christ is his, and heaven is his, and the providence of God, to direct all for good, it is his still; he hath somewhat to joy in at the worst. And therefore all his affections are tempered and qualified.

And they that buy, as if they possessed not.

It

It is lawful to buy, it is lawful to make contracts, and property is lawful; every man ought to have his own. There were no theft, if there were no property, nor there could be any works of mercy. Now, if property and dominion of things be lawful, that we may poſſeſs things as our own, then buying is lawful; that is one way of contract, of making things our own, there is no danger in that. But there is a danger in the manner of buying. Men buy to perpetuate themſelves, they call their lands after their names, and they think to continue for ever. God makes fools of them; for how few have you that go beyond the third generation? how few houſes have you, that the child, or grandchild, can ſay, This was my grandfather's, and my great-grandfather's? How few houſes have you, that thoſe who are in them now, can ſay, My anceſtor dwelt here, and thoſe were his lands? Go over a whole country, few can ſay ſo.

Men when they build, together with building in the earth, they build caſtles in the air; they have conceits: Now, I build for my child, and for my child's child. God croſſes them; either they have no poſterity, or by a thouſand things, that fall out in the world, it falls out otherwiſe. "The time is ſhort, and the faſhion of this world paſſeth away." That is, the buildings paſs away, the owner paſſeth away, all things here paſs away; and therefore buy as if you poſſeſſed not, buy ſo as we neglect not the beſt poſſeſſion in heaven; and ſo poſſeſs theſe things, as being not poſſeſſed and commanded of them.

In Levit. xxv. there you ſee the year of jubilee was, that all poſſeſſions might return again, if men would. God trained them up by this, to teach them that they ſhould not think of inheriting things ſo long that they bought; for it returned in the year of jubilee, in the fiftieth year; ſo we muſt learn that we cannot poſſeſs theſe things long. Though we poſſeſs them ourſelves, we may be thruſt out by fraud or tyranny. Therefore, "Let thoſe that buy, be as though they did not poſſeſs." Jer. xxii. 23. he ſaith, "Thou makeſt thy neſt in the cedars," and thinkeſt it ſhall be thus and thus with thee. Oh! let us not build, and dwell in our hopes and aſſurance upon that which will yield no certain hope and aſſurance in this world.

And then, for brethren, that have an inheritance in heaven, for them to buy as if they ſhould live here for ever! Brethren, that is a reaſon to take them off. Brethren buy, as if you poſſeſſed not.

Thus much of the four directions.

They that use the world, as not abusing it.

We may use the world while we are in it; for we cannot want the things of this life. We are members of two worlds, while we are here. We are members of this world, and we are heirs of a better—we have a relation to two worlds.

Now, while we live in this world, we must use the things of this world. How many things doth this poor life need, while we are in this world? While we are passengers, we must have things to help us in the way to heaven. Passengers must have necessaries, there is no question of that. And therefore we must use the world many ways. But then, use the world,

As not abusing it.

There is danger in using the world; there is a danger of cleaving to the things of this world so much, as that we forget a better world; and therefore we should use it as not abusing it.

How should we use it?

Why, use this world as laying a foundation for a better world. While we live here, use the world, so as we may further our reckonings for a better. Use the things of the world as we may express some grace in the using of it. Use the world as that the using of it may comfort us when the thing passeth. The world passeth, but let us use the world, so as that the grace that we express in the use of it may continue. Use the world to the honour of God, to the good of others, to the increase of our reckoning; abuse it not to the dishonour of God: fight not against God with his own blessings, that is to abuse the world. Forget not God the giver. Were it not an unkind thing, if a man should invite strangers, and they should turn their kind friend that had invited them, out of doors? And so it is to use the things of the world so, as to turn God out of our hearts, who gives all. Turn not the things of this world against God, or against others, to make them weapons of injustice, to be great to ruin others. Abuse them not to wrong, and to pierce our own souls, as the apostle saith, with care and the like; this is to abuse the world, when we dishonour God, and wrong others, or pierce our own souls. God hath not given us the

the things of this world for this end, to hurt ourselves with them. And therefore, together with things, let us desire a gracious use of them; for that is better than the thing itself. Labour to use them, as not abusing them; as we shall, if we have not grace to use them well. Many men have the gifts of God without God, because they have not his grace. When we have the gifts of God, desire grace to manage them. To his children, God gives this with the other; he never gives them any thing, but he gives them grace to make a sanctified use of it. They are sanctified to all things, and all things are sanctified unto them—use the world, as not abusing of it. The reason is strong, the time is short. Why should we be overmuch in using the things of this world, (for that is one way of abusing of the things of this world). The time is short, we must be pulled from them whether we will or no. And therefore let us wean ourselves. And then, "the fashion of this world passeth away." Why should we dote upon a perishing fashion? All things here pass away, the things of the world pass away, and a new fashion comes after. You, brethren, that are heirs of a better world, use this world, as not abusing it: brethren, he puts them in mind of a higher calling. And so I come to the last.

That is the second reason, the *schema*, that is, the apparition of this world, the outward fashion, the outward view and hue of the things of this world pass away. It is a notable diminishing word in the original, as if the world were not a substance, but a fashion, a scheme. As we say in philosophy, in the air there are apparitions and substances, as there are flying-horses sometimes, and fighting men, in the air. These are not substances, but apparitions of things; it is but *phasis*, but an apparition, or shape. The substance and true reality of these things, is another matter: so whatsoever is in the world, it is but an apparition. When the devil shewed Christ all the kingdoms of the world, he shewed him but an apparition, but a shew of things.

There is a diminishing in the word, "shew."

And then in the words, "fadeth away."

"The fashion of this world passeth away;" or, as some translate it, "Deceives and turns us aside:" and so it doth indeed from better things. "The fashion of this world passeth away;" that translation is fit enough—it passeth away. Now shall

ſhall we be immoderate in any thing that paſſeth away? It is but an apparition, but a ſhew, but a pageant. The word is partly taken from a pageant, or a ſhew that hath a reſemblance of this and that. But there is no reality or ſubſtance in a pageant.

Uſe.—From this, learn to conceive aright of the things of this life, that there is no reality in them to ſpeak of. They have a kind of reality; riches are in ſome ſort riches; and beauty is in ſome ſort beauty; and nobility is in ſome ſort nobility; and, ſo poſſeſſions are in ſome ſort poſſeſſions. But all this is but a pageant, as it were; as a man that acts in a pageant, or in a play, he is in ſome ſort a king, or a beggar, for the time: but we value him not as he is then, but as he is when he is off the ſtage. And while we live here, we act the part, ſome of a rich man, ſome of a noble man, ſome of a beggar, or poor man; all is but acting of a part. And there is a leſs proportion between the acting of a part in this life, than there is between our life and eternity. All is but the acting of a part. We are not rich in the grave more than others. The king is as poor in the grave as the baſe peaſant; his riches follow him not. The worm and the grave know no difference; when we go to that houſe there is no difference: all acting, and all differences end in the grave. And therefore conſidering, that this world is but an apparition, but the acting of a part, why ſhould we think ourſelves the better for any thing here? Doth he that acts the part of a nobleman upon the ſtage, think himſelf better than another, that acts the part of a poor man? No. He knows he ſhall go off in a ſhort time, and then he ſhall be as he was before. Why are we not thus wiſe in better things? It is not he that acts the greateſt part, but he that acts any part beſt. He that acts the part of a poor man, may do better upon the ſtage, than he that acts the part of a rich man; it is not the greatneſs of the part, but the well acting of it—all is but an apparition. If a mean man honour God in his condition, and be faithful in his mean eſtate, he is a thouſand times better than a great man, that makes his greatneſs an inſtrument of injuſtice, as if all the world were to ſerve his turn, and to make men idolize him; ſuch a man is a wretched man, and will be, when he is turned off the ſtage. It is no matter how long he hath lived, or how great a part he hath acted, but how well. We value not men as they are when they are acting, but as they are after. If they were bad before, they

are

are bad after: and they are praiſed after, if they do it well. So it is no matter what a man acts, if he do it well, he is for ever happy. If he do it ill, he is for ever miſerable—all here is but a pageant. If you talk of reality, it is in the things of religion. If you talk of true nobility, it is to be the child of God. If you talk of true riches, they are thoſe that we carry to our death-bed, thoſe that we carry to heaven; thoſe that comfort the ſoul; thoſe that enrich the ſoul with grace, and comfort, and peace; that is true riches. If you talk of true beauty, it is to have the image of God ſtamped upon our ſouls, to be like Chriſt, to be new creatures. If we talk of true ſtrength, it is to ſtand againſt temptations, to be able to ſerve God, and to go through the world without polluting our ſouls, to bear croſſes as we ſhould—that is, the true reality. The things of this life are all but apparitions and pageants. The greateſt man in the world will ſay ſo when he lies a dying, as that great Emperor ſaid, "I have run through all things, and now nothing doth me good." The reality was gone that he thought of, and now there was nothing but a ſhew and apparition; when the reality was gone, nothing doth me good. Come to a man that is gaſping out his life, and ask him, What doth honours do you good? what doth riches do you good? what doth poſſeſſions do you good? Solomon, a wiſe man, wiſe by the ſpirit of God, wiſe by experience, becauſe he was a king: wiſe by a ſpecial gift of God, a gift of wiſdom. He had all to enable him to give a true ſentence; he that had run through the variety of all good things, what doth he pronounce, but "Vanity of vanities?" he cannot expreſs himſelf, "vanity of vanities," ſaith wiſe, holy, experienced Solomon; he that had all abilities, that no man was able to ſay it ſo well as he, yet he ſaith, Vanity of vanities; and that which is worſe, vexation of ſpirit, if a man have not eſpecial grace to manage them aright. And therefore, I beſeech you brethren, do but repreſent the things of this life, even under the notion here, they are but apparitions, they are but pageants. If we go to buy any thing in this world, we firſt pull off the trappings, we pull off the mask, or elſe we may be cheated in the thing: ſo, if we would judge of the things in this world, as they are—What is within riches? is there not a great deal of care? What is within government? What is within the things of this life? There is a goodly ſhew and apparition: what is within? pull off the mask,

mask, and then you ſhall ſee the things of this world. The more you pierce into them, and the more you know them, the worſe you like them. If you come near theſe things, there is emptineſs, and not only ſo, but vexation. But in the things of heaven, the nearer you are, the more you will love them, the more you will admire them: the more a man knows God, the more he may know him: the more a man knows Chriſt and loves Chriſt, the more he may: there is a height, and breadth, and depth, there are all dimenſions in the love of God in Chriſt, and in the joys of heaven, they are beyond comprehenſion. The things that we have in Chriſt, they are larger than the ſoul, we cannot comprehend them. There is nothing here, but we may compaſs it, it is inferior to our knowledge and affections; our affections and knowledge are larger than any thing here—the things of a better life are beyond all. Shall we be taken with apparitions, that the more we know them, the more we ſhall under-value them?

And the faſhion of this world paſſeth away.

It is a faſhion, it is but a faſhion, and then it paſſeth away. Indeed they do paſs away; experience ſheweth that they paſs even like a river, the water paſſeth away, it goes, and goes along, but it never comes: ſo the things of this world, they paſs away, but they never come again; they vaniſh away, and we paſs away with them too. Even as men in a ſhip, whether they eat or drink, or ſleep, or wake, the ſhip goeth, and they go in it. So it is in this world, whether we eat, or drink, or ſleep, we paſs away to death. Every day takes a part of our life away; and every day we live, we live a day leſs; it is gone and paſt, and never returns again, as water, when it is gone: and whether we walk, or do any thing, the time paſſeth. While you hear, and while I ſpeak, the time paſſeth, and never returns again: ſo the faſhion of this world paſſeth away. All things are paſſing here.

Goods that are not ſtable, we ſay are moveables; and indeed thoſe things which we call immoveables are moveables—all paſs away. Heaven and earth will paſs away ere long; and there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Kingdoms paſs away, and kings paſs away, and ſtates paſs away. What is become of Rome? What is become of Jeruſalem? What is become of Babylon, and all thoſe goodly cities? All are paſſed away,

away, they are all gone. This experience ſpeaks, as well as divinity.

Now the ground of all this is, in the nature of things; all things are made of nothing, being therefore ſubject to fall to their firſt principles again. That is the fundamental reaſon, why things may be moveable and paſs away. But that they are ſo, it is not a ſufficient reaſon; for God might have ſuſpended the mutability of things, if he would, as the heavenly angels are mutable, becauſe they are created; but God hath ſuſpended their mutability, world without end. And therefore it is not ſufficient that all things are of nothing; it ſhews that of themſelves they may turn to nothing indeed.

2. But there is another reaſon. Since the fall of man, there is a curſe upon all things. There is a ſentence of mutability and change, and a ſentence of paſſing is paſſed upon all: all things that have a beginning ſhall have an end, and that this world ſhall be a ſtage of changes and alterations: There is a ſentence of vanity upon the creature, "the creature is ſubject to vanity, not of his own will, but becauſe God hath ſubdued it to vanity." Rom. viii. Man committed treaſon, and therefore the creatures which are man's ſervants, all mourn for their maſter's fall; they all mourn in black, as it were. All the creatures are ſubject to vanity, all the creatures under the ſun are ſubject to mutability and change: but we may thank ourſelves; we are the grand traitors that brought this miſery upon the creature; that is the true reaſon why all things paſs away, and ſo ſo why ourſelves have the ſentence of death upon us; we paſs away, and the things paſs away, and we in the uſe of them. Thus you ſee the ground of this, why things paſs away, in the ſentence of mutability and vanity that God hath paſſed upon them.

If this be ſo, beloved, let us learn not to care much for things that will paſs away, not to paſs for them: learn all the former directions. The faſhion of this world paſſeth away.—Shall we grieve much for the loſs of that which we cannot hold? If a glaſs be broke, is a man much angry? we ſay, It is brittle metal, and nothing laſteth always. If a friend be dead, ſhall a man be therefore angry?—the faſhion of this world paſſeth away; a ſentence is paſſed upon them. Shall I be moved at that which God hath ſet down a law for, that one generation ſhall go, and another ſhall follow after; and there is a ſucceſſion,

ſucceſſion, as in the ſtreams of water? Shall I oppoſe God's ſentence? God hath made all things frail, and it is but the common condition of all things ſince the fall.

So it ſhould be a uſe of comfort and contentment with any thing in this world, place, or riches, or honour, I muſt leave them, I know not how ſoon; and this will breed a diſpoſition of contentment. It is enough for him that muſt leave all, I know not how ſoon, have I little or much, I muſt leave all: here is enough for him that muſt leave all. And therefore leave worldly things to worldly men—leave all theſe vain things to vain men. Shall I build a fixed hope on vain things? oh! no, that ſhould not be ſo.

As we muſt learn contentment, ſo it ſhould take us off from the hopes of this world, and from promiſing ourſelves that which we have no promiſe in the world for, nor experience. Who promiſed thee thou ſhouldſt enjoy thy wife long, that thou ſhouldſt enjoy thy children long, thy place long? Haſt thou a promiſe for this? the nature of things fight againſt thee. The things of the world are variable. Have we not experience of former times; and have we not ſcripture to ſhew that all is vanity? Why ſhould we promiſe ourſelves that which the world doth not promiſe us, or that we cannot ſee experience of in the world? Why ſhould we have a condition different from all men? The ſeeing of things in a condition of fading, as it ſhould teach us contentment in the uſe of all things, ſo it ſhould teach us moderation and wiſdom, that we ſhould not promiſe ourſelves any thing in this world.

And it ſhould teach us to provide for ſtable, for certain things in changes and alterations: Look to ſomewhat that may ſtand by us, when all theſe things are gone. Will all theſe things leave me, and muſt I leave them? How is it with me for world without end? Should I not therefore look for thoſe comforts and thoſe graces, and for that condition that will abide when I am gone hence? what folly were it to neglect it! Let us labour for a ſanctified uſe of the paſſing away of theſe things, that we may provide for that which is not ſubject to alteration and change. The favour of God in Chriſt is for everlaſting. The graces of God's ſpirit are for everlaſting. The condition of God's children is for everlaſting. And therefore why ſhould we look after periſhing things, and neglect better? For a chriſtian

tian hath the reality of things, he hath a husband for ever; he hath matter of joy for ever; he hath a poſſeſſion for ever: and then there will be a new world. All theſe things are but ſhews; the chriſtian hath the reality of all, that never paſſeth away; and therefore, conſidering that all things paſs away, but the things that belong to a chriſtian, as a chriſtian; let chriſtians learn to make the moſt of their beſt calling, and value themſelves as they are chriſtians, and value others as they are chriſtians, not as they are rich, or as they are poor, as they are noble, or as they are great. The faſhion of this world paſſeth away; value them by what they have of eternity—What of the ſpirit is in them? what of the image of God is in them? what grace is in them? are they new born? are they truly noble? are they new creatures? value them by that, and labour to get that ſtamped upon our children, and upon our friends. Labour to have communion ſo with thoſe that we love, that we may have eternal communion in heaven with them. Labour ſo to enjoy our friends, that our friendſhip may continue in heaven, conſidering, that the faſhion of this world paſſeth away. All friendſhip, all bonds, all poſſeſſions, all that we dote upon, and are deſperately mad on, all paſs away—"The faſhion of this world paſſeth away."

It is a ſtrange thing, beloved, that a man capable of high thoughts, of excellent thoughts, ſhould ſpend the marrow of his ſoul, and the ſtrength of his ſpirits about theſe things; that he ſhould tire his ſpirits, that he ſhould crack his conſcience, that he ſhould wear out his life about things which he cannot tell how long he ſhall enjoy, and neglect theſe things that abide for ever: for a man this is ill; but for brethren, as he ſaith, for brethren to do ſo, that have an inheritance immortal, for them to be caſt off the hooks for every croſs, for every loſs, that are the children of God, and heirs of heaven; what a ſhame is this, that chriſtians are ſo much in joy, and ſo much in ſorrow for theſe things? It comes from theſe grounds:

Firſt, they do not conſider and look upon things as paſt: they look not with the eye of faith upon things; theſe things will paſs; but they look upon things in paſſing, and they ſee no alteration for the preſent. They ſhould conſider what ſentence is paſſed upon them; theſe things are as good as paſt, they will be gone ere long: look upon them therefore as things paſſed. We are dead, our friends are dead, and the world is gone. Faith ſaith this; we conſider not this; and ſo we are carried

away

away with them: we look upon things, and there we ſee little alteration. A man that looks upon the ſhadow, he cannot ſee it: but if he come two or three hours after, he ſhall ſee it paſt. Let us look upon things as gone, though they be not for the preſent gone; ſee them in the eye of faith, and that will make us conſider them as paſſing away.

2. Again, we are deceived hence in the paſſing of the things of this life, that we compare them with eternity. We think it it a great matter to enjoy things twenty or forty years. What is this point of time to eternity? Compare this ſhort time here, of health and ſtrength, of honour and place, and friends: what is this to eternity? what deſperate folly is it to venture the loſs of eternity, for the enjoying of theſe things? Compare theſe things with world without end, and that will keep us from being deceived with theſe paſſing things: we are deceived, becauſe we lay them not in the balance with things that are for ever.

3. And then the third ground is, we are forgetful, we are not mindful of our beſt condition—we make not that uſe of our knowledge that we might.

When a chriſtian is all in paſſion, all in joy, all in fears, or in grief: why, what is the matter at that time? What thoughts hath he of his eternal ſtate, of the fading condition of theſe things? he is forgetful and mindleſs. And therefore let us labour to keep our minds in a heavenly frame. And, to draw to a concluſion, let us labour to value ourſelves, if we be chriſtians, as we all profeſs ourſelves to be, value ourſelves above all things below. It is a poorneſs of ſpirit for a chriſtian, to overjoy, or to over-grieve for any thing that is worſe than himſelf. Are not all things ſo that are here, if we be chriſtians indeed? If we be not chriſtians, the very toads and ſerpents are better than blaſpheming and filthy creatures, that are oppoſers of God's ordinances; they are better than ſuch wretches as many among us, the devil is almoſt as good as they, ſuch are next the devil. The earth they tread is better than they: but if a man have grace in him, all the world is inferior to him. What weakneſs of ſpirit is it therefore, and emptineſs, to be put off with overmuch cauſe of grief and ſorrow, for any thing below that is meaner than ourſelves, for any thing that is fading, when we have a condition that is not ſubject to fade? And therefore, oft think of our dignity in Chriſt: think of this motive here, (brethren),

thren), think of that, as well as of the fading condition here. If we would wean ourselves from these things, oft think of the eternal estate of a christian, that our thoughts may run upon that much; and then upon the frail condition of all things below, that we may be taken off from them. Two things mortify a man:

1. The taking off his affections from what they are set on; and, 2, to set them upon what will fill them, and satisfy them to the full. If a man do that, he doth that which a mortified man should do, who is in this world passing to a better.

To conclude all with this:

All things here in this world are subordinate to a further end. And let us consider therefore that we so use them, as that we lose not the main.

All the contentments of a traveller, are subordinate in the way to the journey's end. If things come amiss in his inn, will he quarrel with his host, that he hath not a soft bed? he will think I am going, I shall have better at home, and these lead me homeward, so all things below are subordinate helps to better: Shall we make them the main? Shall we make all things subordinate to them, as worldlings do subordinate religion to worldly things, and make all things contrary? They do not grieve as if they grieved not; but they hear, as they heard not. They receive the sacrament, as if they received it not. They pray, as they prayed not. They speak of holy things and do them, as if they did them not. But for other things, they are drowned in them. This is the policy of satan, that labours to bring religion to be subordinate. So that if men can be religious, and have the favour of such a one: if he can be religious, and be great in the world, he will: but if religion itself, and the standing for it, hinder their aims, away with it; they will rather be hollow, than stand for a good cause, because they have not learned to subordinate things to the main end; and the reason is, because they have not grace and heavenly wisdom to teach them in what place things should be valued, what is the main, and what attends upon the main, and therefore they take bye-things for the main, and the main for the bye. Indeed no man is wise, but a sound christian, and he is wise for his soul, and he is wise for eternity. But what is this as to the sacrament? To cut off other things, it is this.

Are theſe things periſhing food, ſuch as we muſt leave, vain and empty things? Will not this therefore make us ſeek the main, the food that endures to everlaſting life, and labour to be in Chriſt more and more, labour to cheriſh communion with Chriſt, that everlaſting bond? What is the ſacrament, but the food of our ſouls, or everlaſting manna, that will continue for ever, and make us continue for ever? Chriſt, if we have him, he continues for ever, and he makes us continue for ever too. And therefore conſidering that all things elſe are vain, I beſeech you let the conſideration of that which hath been ſpoken, be as ſour herbs to make the paſſover, to make Chriſt reliſh the better. Oh! are all things vain, and ſhall I not labour to have my part in that, which ſhall never die, in him that is my huſband for ever, and my Lord for ever? Shall I not labour to ſtrengthen my intereſt in him that hath all good things? What if all the earth ſhould fail? If I have communion with Chriſt, I have all. If I marry Chriſt, I have all with him. All is my jointure, if I have Chriſt once. "All things are yours, if you are Chriſt's." If I have Chriſt what can I want? Let this ſtrengthen our deſire to come to the ſacrament. Chriſt is the food of the ſoul; all other food, the ſweetneſs of it is gone within a quarter of an hour: the ſweetneſs is gone preſently, and the ſtrength within a day or two, of all other food that we take; but this food, Chriſt, is the food of the ſoul. Chriſt offering himſelf unto death, and ſhedding out his blood, and giving his body to be crucified for us; this food feeds our ſouls to everlaſting life. We cheriſh our faith in the aſſurance of the favour of God to everlaſting: the ſweetneſs, the ſtrength, and the comfort of this food, endures for ever. And therefore, conſidering that all other things are food that periſheth; labour for that which will feed us to everlaſting life. And then we ſhall make a right uſe of the alteration and change of all things.

A heathen man can ſay this text, "brethren;" aſide; a heathen man could tell you, The faſhion of things paſs away. He ſees them, and thereupon could infer the negative part; therefore, we ſhould not be worldly; by the light of nature a man that hath no religion may be found in that; and therefore not to care much for earthly things, conſidering that we muſt be gone.

A heathen man could ſpeak very ſweetly this way, as Plutarch and Seneca, and the reſt: what fine ſpeeches had they this way? Oh! but the poſitive part, that is, when we ſee all things

things here are vain and fading; to know what we muſt cleave too; that is proper to religion, to know Chriſt, and the good we have by Chriſt; when we have him, we have all; he is the food of our ſouls; theſe things are proper to religion; and therefore let us ariſe from the conſideration of the vanity of all things, to the poſitive part, to intereſt ourſelves in that which is better than all things. Which if we have, we have all; and then we ſhall make a right uſe of this.

THE

CHRISTIAN'S PORTION;

Wherein is unfolded the unsearchable Riches he hath by his interest in Christ.

---

1 COR. iii. 21, 22, 23.

"*Let no man glory in man, for all things are yours, whether Paul,*
"*or Apollo, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things*
"*present, or things to come, all are yours; and you are Christ's,*
"*and Christ is God's.*

THE principal ſcope of the apoſtle in this place, is to cut off faction, and overmuch dependence upon men, who had crept into the conſciences of people, and ſet up themſelves inſtead of Chriſt. For that is the pride of falſe teachers, to ſet up themſelves in the conſcience where Chriſt alone ſhould be. The apoſtle to prevent this, ſaith, Let no man glory in man; do not glory in your teachers, they are but your ſervants and Chriſt's ſervants, "for all things are yours"—all the teachers in the world are your ſervants, and Chriſt's. Having ſet down this generally, "All things are yours," to diſcourage them from glorying in man, he parcels that general into particulars, "Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas, or life, or death."

1. All perſons are yours.
2. All things are yours.
3. All events are yours.

Perſons.

Perſons.—Paul, Apollo, Cephas.

Things.—The world, or life, or death.

Events.—Whatſoever can come for the preſent, or for time to come. "All is yours."

For the perſons.—Paul, Apollo, Cephas, are yours; therefore Peter is not the head of the church; he is named here in the third place, among the reſt, and after the reſt. Whether it be Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas, he is yours. You know who ground all their religion on this, Peter is the head of the church, and they are the ſucceſſors of Peter: but Peter is the church's, and therefore cannot be the head and commander.

The world is yours.

What world is the church's?

1. The natural world is the church's, that is, the frame of heaven and earth; all things are made for man, and he is made for God. As the wiſe philoſopher could ſay, that man is the end of all things in a ſemi-circle, that is, all things in the world are made for him. He is made for God, in whom all things end. As all things come from a point, and end there again, ſo all things come from God, and all end in God "We are Chriſt's, and Chriſt is God's;" but the world is ours, and we are God's, all things in the world are our ſervants; for they mourn in black, as it were, for our miſeries, ſince the fall. And in our reſtoring again, they ſhall be reſtored, they wait for the day, as it is, Rom. viii. 21. "For the glorious liberty of the ſons of God:" they have their happineſs and miſery together with men.

But there is another world that is ours, take it in the worſt ſenſe, the world of wicked men; all their plots, and the prince of the world, are the church's.

How is this? He and all his inſtruments are under the command of him that turns all his deſigns contrary to his own intention; this is a hell to ſatan, and one of the chief torments he hath, that as his malice is limited by this power, ſo his power is limited by God's power, who overſhoots him in his own bow. Whatever he deſigns againſt the head, Chriſt, and againſt his members, the church, it is overturned for the good of the church. In the primitive church ſome were given over to ſatan, that they might learn not to blaſpheme. It is a

ſtrange thing that ſatan ſhould teach not to blaſpheme, who is the author of blaſphemy. Yet by conſequence, he afflicting their bodies, thereupon they came to be wiſe, and ſeemed to be moderate and ſober, and to be chriſtianly minded, and not to blaſpheme. So the prince of the world is ours in this, by an over-commanding power, that turns all to good againſt his intentions. For there is but one grand monarch in the world. Every kingdom is under a higher kingdom, there is but one to whom all are ſubject, there is one grand wheel that turns all the others, and therefore ſatan himſelf is ſerviceable to God's end, whether he will or no.

2. And then for the world of wicked men; all their deſigns, though for the preſent they ſeem to be againſt the church, yet they are ſerviceable to the church; for wicked men are but the ſervants of the church, as it were, to waſh the church, to purge the church, to do baſe ſervices that God intends for the refining of the church; and all their hatred is for the good of the church; for God ſuffers the world to hate his children, that his children might not love the world; for if the world did not hate his, they would love the world, and it would be a dangerous love. The church is a ſtrange corporation; it is ſuch a corporation as hath the greateſt benefit by enemies. The enemies of the church are the promoters of the greateſt good of the church. The very world is the church's, take it in the worſt ſenſe; for the wicked world that lies in miſchief.—But I will not dwell upon that. To go on.

Or Life.

The life of others is the church's.

Why doth God continue the life of good magiſtrates and good paſtors?

1. For the church. As Paul ſaith, "It were better for me to be with Chriſt," a great deal; yet for your ſakes I muſt continue. I am content to be without the joys of heaven a while, for your good.

And therefore my life is yours, it is at your ſervice—for you I ſhall continue ſtill.

2. And ſo the life of good magiſtrates, it is for the benefit of the church; it were better for them to be in heaven, the life of all

all that may be ſerviceable to the church, till they have acted their part, and ſerved God in their generation, as it is ſaid of David, Acts iii. 36. "he ſerved God in his own generation:" ſo every magiſtrate hath his generation, a time allotted, a generation to ſtand up in the church and ſtate, and to ſerve God in his turn, and then God takes him away.

3. And then the life of every particular chriſtian is theirs; for God ſuffers them to enjoy it ſo long as life may be a benefit, to gather the more aſſurance of ſalvation, and to do their work that he hath given them to do here; and when they have done their work, they are gathered to their fathers: ſo that life is the church's. And indeed life is a ſpecial benefit; becauſe, by the advantage of life we further our reckonings. A good chriſtian, the longer he lives, the larger good accounts he hath; all his ſins are wiped away, they ſhall not be laid to his charge; all his deeds, to a cup of cold water, ſhall be ſet on the ſcore, and he ſhall be rewarded: there is not a ſigh, nor a tear, but it is regiſtered: the longer a man liveth, if he ſhould live to the age of Methuſalem, the richer he ſhould be in good works; and the more rich he is in good works, the more he ſhall have his part and ſhare in glory after; and therefore, "life is yours." The happier the time in which he lives is for his good; and he makes the time happy, and it is happier for himſelf; the more rich he is in good works, the more rich he ſhall be in glory after. Theſe things being ſo, we ſhould be very thankful that God yields to us this life; for, beſides an advantage of doing good, it is a preparative to a better. This life is, as it were, the ſeminary of heaven. Heaven indeed is the true paradiſe of all the plants of God; but they muſt have a ſeminary to be planted in firſt; and therefore the church is called the kingdom of heaven, becauſe we are firſt planted here. Now this life is an advantage, we are planted here in the church, to grow a while, until we be taken from our ſeminary, the paradiſe of the church, to the paradiſe in heaven. So "life is ours" for that end. I will not further enlarge the point—it is clear.

Or Death.

4. As life is ours, ſo death is ours. It is a ſtrange thing that death ſhould be ours, which is a deſtroying hoſtile thing to nature, "the king of fears," as the ſcripture calls it; and that "terrible of all terribles," as the philoſopher terms it; "the

laſt enemy," as Paul ſaith—that death ſhould be ours. Death is ours many ways; you ſee here it is a piece of our jointure; for theſe words contain the jointure of the church. The church is Chriſt's ſpouſe, all things are Chriſt's; and therefore all things are the ſpouſe's: and, among other particular gifts given to the church, "death is ours." It is a ſtrange thing that death ſhould be given to the church, and yet ſo it is; and we ſhall ſee this, if we conſider how death in the goſpel is turned into another thing, it is a harmleſs thing in the goſpel, the ſting is pulled out, it hath loſt all its venom in Chriſt. Now death is a paſſage to another world, it is the gate of glory; death doth nothing but diveſt us of theſe raiments that we have here on our bodies, and puts us into garments of glory, it puts off theſe rags, and puts us into a better condition, that is all the hurt it doth; it ends all that is ill, and all is determined in death; it is the laſt evil, and it is the beginning of all that is good, that is everlaſtingly good, that is ſpiritually good, and eternally good; for by death we are freed from the labour of ſin, which is a labour irkſome to God's people, by reaſon of a principle of corruption which they have in them, that accompanies them till they be in their grave. Death is the accompliſhment of mortification; in death there is an end of the labour of ſin, and of all other labours whatſoever; for death is a ſleep, and all labours end in ſleep; and, as after ſleep the ſpirits are refreſhed, ſo after death we ſhall be more refreſhed than we can conceive now. So death is ours; it ends all labours of ſin, and all labours of the body, and it frees us from all contagion of wicked men, and from all grief from wicked men, and it ſets us clear out of ſatan's reach; ſatan hath nothing to do with us when we are dead once; becauſe the world here is the kingdom of ſatan. But when we are gone hence, ſatan hath nothing to do with us, and that is a great privilege. So death is ours, it frees us from all that is evil, our death is our birth-day. Indeed we never live till we die; for what is your life? alas, it is a dying life. Every day we live, a part of our life is taken away—we die every day.

The more we have lived, the leſs of our life we have to live; this is but a dying life.

There are three degrees of life:—

1. The life in the mother's womb.

the

2. The life in the world.

3. The life in heaven.

The life in heaven begins at death; death is the birth-day of that life. Death's day is the birth-day of immortality. When Chriſt came to die to purchaſe life, he came not to die to purchaſe a ſorry life on earth; but he came to die to purchaſe immortal glory; that is the life that Chriſt came to die for, and to purchaſe. The day of death is the firſt birth-day of that life; and, for our bodies, they are but refined by death, and fitted as veſſels caſt into the fire to be moulded and faſhioned to be moſt glorious veſſels after; ſo our bodies are fitted by the grave, till body and ſoul be for ever happy at the reſurrection; ſo that death is ours, and hereupon it is, that the wiſe man ſaith, that "The day of death is better than the day of birth." When we are born we come into miſery; when we die, we go out of miſery. It is better to go out of miſery than to come into miſery. If the day of death be better than the day of birth to a chriſtian, certainly then death is theirs; and "bleſſed are thoſe that die in the Lord," ſaith the ſpirit. A voice from heaven ſaith ſo, and therefore write, ſaith he, it may be written; if the ſpirit ſaith it, it is teſtimony and argument enough; "Bleſſed are thoſe that die in the Lord, they reſt from their labours, and their reward follows them." They reſt from all that is evil, and their reward follows them; all that is good, their works follow them So that if all evil ceaſe, and all good follow, I hope death may well be ſaid to be ours. "Death is ours," it is our preferment; why ſhould we be afraid of that which is a part of our portion? as the apoſtle ſaith here.

Death is yours.

I beſeech you, therefore, let us lay up this againſt theſe dark times, wherein death will be repreſented to us as an ugly and grim thing; it is ſo to nature indeed; but to faith, death is our friend, it is become amiable: indeed there is nothing in the world that doth us ſo much good as death, for it is the beſt phyſician, it cures all diſeaſes whatſoever of ſoul and body, it frees us from all. And indeed, (to ſhut up all this point) death is the death of death, it is the deſtruction of itſelf; for after death there is no more death, ſo it conſumes itſelf—by death we overcome death. We can never die more, we are freed from all death; to be afraid of death is to be afraid of life, to be afraid of

of victory; for we never overcome death till we die. Lay up theſe conſiderations againſt the time of need, the diſeaſes of the body, the guilt of ſin, the loſs of employment, the ſtripping of us of all earthly comforts, they will all meet in a centre, in a point, at death. A man had need to gather the greater comfort againſt that hour; and can we have a greater comfort than this, that now it is become our friend, that it is ours? now, "bleſſed be God for Jeſus Chriſt," that hath made in him, even death, the bitterest thing of all, to be ſweet unto us.

Or things preſent.

Whatſoever is preſent ſerves us, whatſoever it be, good or evil, all is yours; but the moſt difficult is in

Things to come.

For what aſſurance have we of things to come? Things to come are ours, whether they be good or evil.

1. For good. Death is to come, and that is ours; and for judgement, that is ours; for our head, our Saviour, and our husband, he ſhall be our judge: and at the day of judgment, we ſhall judge the world; and then after judgment, heaven is ours, immortality is ours, happineſs is ours, all is ours then.

Indeed the beſt is to come, this is the beſt part of the portion; for if we had nothing but what we have in this world, we were of all men moſt miſerable. Alas, what have we, if things preſent only are ours? but things to come alſo are ours; and the beſt is behind, that for which Chriſt came into the world is behind, that which he enjoys in heaven is ours: he will take his ſpouſe where himſelf is, into his own houſe, and he will finiſh the marriage, which is begun in contract, and then we ſhall be for ever with the Lord. The things to come are the main things, that which our faith lays hold of, that which we raiſe ourſelves, and comfort ourſelves by; are eſpecially things to come. "Neither eye hath ſeen, nor ear hath heard, nor hath it ever entered into the heart of man to conceive thoſe things that God hath prepared for his children;" indeed it is a part of heaven to know them, and therefore the full knowledge of them is deferred for that time.

2. The very judgment of the wicked, and the eternal ſentence of them, it is the church's: why? It adds a luſtre to God's mercy,

in

in advancing his own, as it is Rom. ix. 23. God magnifies his mercy to the veſſels of mercy by this, by puniſhing a company of reprobates in whom he hath no delight, by reaſon of their ſins; his mercy much appears by that, even by the eternal ſentence and puniſhment of wicked men. So all ſerves to ſet out the glory and excellency of God's people. St. Paul, in Romans viii. (that heavenly diſcourſe of his), towards the latter end of the chapter, ſaith triumphantly, "nothing ſhall ſeparate us from Chriſt, neither life, nor death, nor things preſent, nor things to come." It is a great comfort, that nothing to come can do us hurt, but this is a degree of comfort higher, that all things to come are ours: ſo then this text affords an exuberancy of comfort above that, it is excellent comfort "that nothing ſhall ſeparate," no not death itſelf: but this is more, death is ours, and in being ſo, it ſhall not only not ſeparate us from Chriſt, though it ſeparate ſoul and body, but join us to him. I beſeech you take it as a notion that may help againſt the terror of that ſeparation that is a means of conjunction, the doleful ſeparation of ſoul and body. Two old friends join better friends together, the ſoul and Chriſt: ſo things to come are ours, even all things taken in the largeſt ſenſe, the bittereſt of all things, even death itſelf, is ours. There are ſeveral uſes, but the grand uſe, which the apoſtle mainly intends, is,

That a chriſtian is as ſure of the time to come, as of the time paſt, or preſent: we are ſure of what we have had, and what we have; but a chriſtian is in ſo firm a condition and ſtate, that he may be as ſure of what is to come, as what he hath; becauſe God and Chriſt are not only *alpha*, but *omega* alſo. Chriſt is not only, "he was, and is," but, "is to come," he is Jehovah, "the ſame for ever." And therefore as things paſt could not hurt us from being elected and called, and things preſent cannot hurt us, but they are ours, ſo are things to come; becauſe God, and Chriſt, who is the mediator under God, hath the command of all things to come; and therefore we may be as ſure of things to come, as of things preſent. What comfort is this to a chriſtian? what ſhould become of me, if times of trouble and public calamity ſhould come, or perſonal to myſelf? What idle forecaſts are theſe, why things to come? come what will come, all ſhall be for the beſt, all things to come are ours, even all things to come are ours whatſoever.

The apoſtle goes on and wraps up all, (as it is the manner of inductions)

inductions) to ſave labour, for it is in vain in that manner of reaſoning that we call inductions, to go over all particulars, becauſe there is the ſame reaſon in all; as if he ſhould ſay, Paul, and the world, and all things are yours, what ſhould I ſay more? I ſhould but trouble you and myſelf to name particulars—"all things are yours."

But yet we muſt underſtand this with ſome limits; we muſt therefore unlooſe ſome knots, and anſwer ſome caſes of conſcience.

1. It may ſeem there is no diſtinction of properties, if all be ours as chriſtians, and if every chriſtian may ſay, All is mine; then what is one man's, is another's, and there will be no property.

I anſwer, Undoubtedly there is a diſtinction of properties in the things in this life, though all be ours, becauſe it is ſpoken of in another ſenſe. All is ours, to help us to heaven; all is ours in order to comfort and happineſs; but for property, ſo all things are not ours; for you know the diſtinction, ſome things are common by the law of nature, as the ſun and air, and many ſuch like things; and ſome by the law of nations; it is but ſome things are common by the law of nations; but then there are ſome that by particular municipal laws are proper.

The diſtinction is eſtabliſhed both by the law of God, and the law of man. Now, not to ſtand long in anſwering this queſtion, tho' there are ſome frantic people that are a little troubled with thoſe things, anabaptiſts and the like. We ſee in ſcripture a diſtinction of eſtates. Religion does not take away the diſtinction of maſter and ſervant, and therefore it does not take away diſtinction of goods, which is leſs. It is a great burden to be a ſervant; but the ſcripture eſtabliſheth the diſtinction of maſter and ſervant, and therefore it eſtabliſheth diſtinction of goods. The ſcripture eſtabliſheth bounty and alms; if there be not a diſtinction of property, where were alms? Solomon ſaith, "the rich and poor meet together;" God is the maker of both, Prov. xxii. 2. He means not, as men, but as poor and rich.

If riches be of God, then diſtinction of properties is of God; for what is riches but a diſtinction of properties; if God make poor and rich, then there muſt be poor and rich. "The poor you have always with you," Mat. xxvi. 11. Therefore the meaning is, all is yours, that is, all that we poſſeſs, and all that we need to help us, is ours, in that order and carriage of things

things that may help us to heaven; and ſo the want of things is ours, as well as the having of them; the very things which a chriſtian wants are his; not only the grace of contentment to want; but when God takes away thoſe things that are hurtful for him, that would hinder him in his courſe to heaven, that is his: it is his, a part of his portion, not to have things if God ſee it good; the want of things is a part of this law. That which is commonly alledged to the contrary, is that in Acts ii. 44. "All things were common."

To which I anſwer, firſt, it was partly upon neceſſity, if all things had not then been common, they had all been taken from them.

2. And then it was, ſecondly, arbitrary alſo, "was it not thine own?" ſaith Peter, Acts v. 4. "Thou mightſt not have parted with it if thou wouldſt;" it was arbitrary, though it was common.

3. And then, thirdly, all things were not common; ſome good men kept their houſes, Acts xii. Mary had her houſe, Acts xii. 12.

4. And then fourthly, all things were common; but how? to diſtribute as they needed, not to catch who would, and who can; but they were ſo common, as they had a care to diſtribute to every one that which they needed.

Another caſe is this, All is the church's, all is good peoples; and therefore if a man be naught, nothing is his. There is a great point of popery grounded upon this miſtake.

For therefore if kings be naught, ſay the Jeſuited papiſts, the pope may excommunicate princes in order to ſpiritual things, he is the Lord and monarch of all, becauſe they are evil governors, and all is the church's.

Anſw.—But we muſt know, that political government is not founded upon religion, ſo that if a prince be not religious, he is no king; but it is founded upon nature; ſo that the heathen who have no religion, yet they may have a lawful government and governors; becauſe it is not ſo built upon religion, but where that is not, yet this may be, and God's appointment to uphold the world; ſo let the king be any thing or nothing for religion, he is yet a lawful king.

But

But it is further objected, that they succeed Christ, &c, and he was the Lord of the world, and they are the vicars of Christ; and therefore they may dispossess and invest whom they will.

Answ.—But you must know Christ as man, had no government at all, but Christ as God-man and mediator, and so he hath no successor. This is incommunicable to the creature: Christ as man, had no kingdom at all; for he saith, "my kingdom is not of this world;" and St Austin saith well, "surely he was no king that feared he should be a king;" for, "when they came to make him king, he withdrew himself, and went away," John vi. 15. Undoubtedly he was no temporal king that fled away, because he would be no king. And now Christ governs all kings in the church; How? as God-mediator, as God-man, and not as man, in which respect he hath substitutes; but not as God-man, so he hath none. They are all vain impudent allegations; as if all were theirs, because all is the church's to dispose, and the pope takes himself virtually to be the whole church.

3. All are ours.—Doth not this hinder bounty? It is mine, and therefore I do not owe any bounty to others, it is mine own.

Ans.—No, all things that we possess in this world are ours, for the service of the church; and when Christ calls for any thing that is ours, we must give it: and if we were not liable to human laws, if we do not, yet we are liable to God's law; and alms, mercy, is justice in God's account, for we ought to be merciful to Christ's. And, in the royal law, the works of love and mercy are justice, and we with-hold good from the owners, if we be not merciful; for, in religion, the poor that by God's providence are cast on us to provide for, they have a right, though not in law, to challenge it, yet in religion: that which we detain from them is theirs; we with-hold good from the owners, when we give not. And therefore, as Ambrose saith very well, If thou hast not nourished one, howsoever in the law thou art not a murderer, yet before God thou art, it is a breach of the law,—thou shalt not steal. Not to relieve, nay, the very denial of comfortable alms, is stealth in God's esteem. And therefore, though all be ours, yet it is so ours, that we must be ready to part with it, when Christ, in his members, calls for it, for then it is not ours.

4. Again, here is another question. If all be ours, we may use

uſe a liberty in all things, what and how we liſt, becauſe all is ours.

I anſwer, the following are good inferences, hence all is ours, and therefore with thankfulneſs we may uſe any good creature of God. All is ours; and therefore we ſhould not be ſcrupulous in the creatures, we ſhould not ſuperſtitiouſly ſingle out one creature from another, as if one were holier than another. All is ours; and therefore with a good conſcience we may uſe God's bounty; but hereupon we muſt not take upon us to uſe things as we liſt, becauſe all is ours; there is difference between right, and the uſe of that right.

And God's children have right to that which God gives them, but they have not the uſe of that right at all times, at leaſt it may be ſuſpended. As, for example, in caſe the laws forbid the uſe of this, or that, which we have a right to; and ſo in caſe of a ſcandal; a man hath right to eat or not to eat, but if his eating offend his brother, he muſt ſuſpend the uſe of his right. 1 Cor. x. 9. So all things are ours in right, not in the uſe of that right; for then it is often a ſcandal to the weak brethren. There is an excellent place for this in the firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians, where he gives directions—"Whatſoever is ſold in the ſhambles, that eat, asking no queſtion;" that is, freely take all the creatures of God without ſcruple, "for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof;" Pſal. xxiv. 1. God out of his bounty, ſpreads a table for all creatures, for men eſpecially—"the eyes of all things look up unto thee, and thou giveſt them meat in due ſeaſon," Pſal. cxlv. 15, 16. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof;" make no ſcruple therefore. But mark, in ver. 28. he reſtrains the uſe of that liberty upon the ſame text of ſcripture, Pſal. xxiv. "But if any man ſay, this is offered to an idol, and take offence, eat not, for his ſake that ſhewed it, and for conſcience ſake, till he be better ſatisfied; for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullneſs thereof."

Queſt.—Can the ſame reaſon be for contraries?

Anſ. Yes, that is for thyſelf, when thou art alone, take all things boldly; God envies not thy liberty. Take any refreſhment, yet needeſt thou not to eat to offend thy brother. God having given thee variety of creatures even in abundance, and hath not limited thee to this or that creature; ſo that the ſame reaſon anſwereth both. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullneſs thereof;"

thereof;" uſe it then alone, and not to the ſcandal of thy brother; for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof. Why ſhouldſt thou uſe this creature as if there were no more but this? and therefore in caſe of ſcandal and offence, we ſhould ſuſpend our liberty, though all be ours.

Again, though all be ours, yet notwithſtanding we have not a ſanctified uſe but by the word and prayer, as it is, 1 Tim. iv. 4. "Every creature of God is good," &c. His meaning is this; though we have a right to all things to our comfort, to help us to heaven, to cheer us in our way, to be, as it were, chariots to carry us, yet in the uſe of that right, we muſt ſanctify all by prayer; we muſt do it by faith that we may apprehend our right, that we do not uſe them with a ſcrupulous conſcience; and then we muſt ſanctify it by prayer, we muſt take it with God's leave, for though we have a right to the uſe of it, we muſt take it at his hand.

And, for inſtance, a father gives all to his ſon that he needs, and promiſeth his ſon, that he ſhall want nothing; but he will have his ſon write a letter, before he have a particular right to any thing; he will have his ſon acknowledge his homage: you ſhall have all, but I will hear from you firſt; you ſhall have all, but I will reach it to you from my hand. So God deals with his children; they have a right to all, but he reacheth it to them in the uſe of the means; we muſt have a civil right, by labour or by contract, &c. And then we muſt have a religious right ſanctified by prayer; we muſt not pull God's bleſſings out of his hands; for though he gives us a right in the thing, yet in the uſe of that right, he will have us holy men.

Queſt.—If you ask, what is the reaſon that good men often fall to decay, and have a great many croſſes in the world?

Anſ.—Why ſurely, (not to enter into God's myſteries, what the ſecret cauſe of this may be), one among many is, when they have God's bleſſings, they ſanctify them not with prayer, they pray not for a bleſſing, they uſe them not religiouſly and holily, and they venture upon their right with ſcandal and offence to others.

Well, thus we ſee how all things are ours, with anſwers to ſuch objections as might be moved. All things are ours, that howſoever we have a right to the thing, yet we muſt have alſo a right in the thing.

Uſe.

Uſe.—To make ſome uſe of all, and ſo an end of this point. "All things are ours," in regard of all things, if it be for our good, whether Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas. Here we ſee then the rich jointure of a chriſtian, that all things are his; that is, they are ſo far his, as ſhall further his journey to God; for though he have a right, as I ſaid before, to all things, he ſhall have, in particular, nothing conveyed to him, but that which may help him to heaven; if a man ſay, why have I not the uſe of ſuch things? God in wiſdom ſees that it is not fit to bring him to heaven.

If poverty be good, I ſhall have it.

If diſgrace be good, I ſhall have it.

If the order of evil things will help me to heaven, I ſhall have them.

If croſs winds will blow me to heaven, I ſhall have them.

For, I ſaid before, the world, and the miſeries of the world, the perſecutions and afflictions, all are ours; that is, the worſt things are commanded to ſerve our main good.

And is not this a wonderful prerogative that a chriſtian hath; that turn him to what condition you will, kill him, or ſpare his life, you hurt him nothing either way? If you ſpare his life, life is his, God ſees his life is good for the church; if you kill him, death is his; kill him, ſave him, enrich him, beggar him, his happineſs is not at your command. There is a commanding power to rule all things, for the good of God's people, that is not at the devotion of any creature in the world, either devils or men.

And therefore, let us comfort ourſelves in this, in regard of the large jointure that we have, we have all things to be ours. And therefore, when a chriſtian comes to be religious, to be a chriſtian indeed, a member of Chriſt, what doth he loſe? he loſeth nothing, all things are his, becauſe Chriſt is his. But to go on. In the ſecond branch, ſaith he,

Ye are Chriſt's.

There is the tenure we hold all things by, becauſe we are Chriſt's. Whatſoever the tenure be amongſt men (which you are better acquainted with than myſelf), I am ſure it is the beſt tenure in religion. All is ours, becauſe we are Chriſt's; we hold in that tenure; if we be not Chriſt's, nothing is ours comfortably. We are Chriſt's, and therefore all is ours.

Queſt.—Thoſe that are not Chriſt's, are not the things theirs that they have, becauſe they are not Chriſt's? have not wicked men a title to what they have?

I anſwer, They have; and it is rigour in ſome, that ſay wicked men are uſurpers of what they have; they have a title, both a civil title, and a title before God. God gave Tyrus to Nebuchadneſſar, as a reward; and God gives wicked men a title to what they have, and they ſhall never be called to account at the day of judgement, for poſſeſſing of what they had, but for abuſing that poſſeſſion; and therefore, properly, they are not uſurpers in regard of poſſeſſion; but they ſhall render an account of the abuſe of that bounty.

It is in this, as it is in the king's carriage to a traitor: when a king gives a traitor his life, he gives him meat and drink that may maintain his life, by the ſame right that he gives him his life. God will have wicked men to live ſo long, to do ſo much ſervice to the church; for all are not extremely wicked that are not Chriſt's members, that go to hell; but there are many of excellent parts and endowments that God hath appointed to do him great ſervice, though they have an evil eye, and intend not his ſervice, but to raiſe themſelves in the world; yet God intends their ſervice for much purpoſe, and he gives them encouragement in the world, as he will not be behind with the worſt men. If they do him ſervice, they ſhall have their reward in that kind, Pſal. lxii. 12. If it be in policy of ſtate, they ſhall have it in that, and they ſhall have commendation and applauſe of men, if they look for that: and if he give them not heaven, they cannot complain, for they cared not for that, they did it not with an eye for that. Now, if God uſe the labour, and the induſtry, and the parts, and endowments of wicked men, for excellent purpoſes, he will give them their reward in outward things: "Verily you have your reward," ſaith Chriſt, Matth. vi. 2. when he gives them life, he gives them outward liberties, and therefore they are no uſurpers in that reſpect; yet thoſe have not ſo full a title as a chriſtian hath, to what they have.

Now to come more directly to the ſecond branch, and to ſhew how we are Chriſt's. I have unfolded that point upon another text, and therefore I will but touch it here, becauſe there are many that did not hear the unfolding of that text, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." Cant. vi. 3.

I.

1. Not to ſpeak of creation, he made all things; but we are Chriſt's by his redemption and purchaſe—"he purchaſed his church with his own blood," Acts xx. 28.

And, ſecondly, we are Chriſt's by ſpiritual marriage; for we are his, and Chriſt is ours; in all ſweet relations he is ours; he hath purchaſed us to be his, in all the ſweet terms of relation: name what you will, we are Chriſt's; we are his ſubjects, as he is a king; we are his ſervants, as he is a Lord; we are his ſcholars, as he is a prophet; we are his ſpouſe, as he is a huſband; we are his members, as he is a head. You cannot name any degree of ſubjection, if it be a ſweet ſubjection and ſubordination, but we are that to Chriſt, and Chriſt is that to us; ſo that Chriſt is ours, and we are Chriſt's, in all the ſweet relations that can be; we are his members, we are his ſpouſe, we are his children; for he is "the everlaſting Father," Iſa. ix. 6. He is all that can be to us, and we are all that can be to him who is lovely and good; we are Chriſt's, and therefore all things are ours, becauſe we are Chriſt's; ſo that we ſee from this, that Chriſt comes in between God and us. God is a pure and holy God, a conſuming fire, and we as chaff and duſt, and therefore Chriſt comes between; you are Chriſt's.

Why?

Becauſe God is a conſuming fire of himſelf; there muſt be a mediator, to come between, who is a friend to both ſides, to us as man, to him as God; ſo muſt be a means of conveying all things from God; all things come originally from the fountain of all, God; they are God's, and in God you know the three perſons meet in one nature, in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, but ſtill the holy God in three perſons doth not convey immediately good things to us, but by the mediation of Chriſt, mediator. "All things are ours, and therefore we are Chriſt's, and Chriſt is God's;" for God will have it thus ſince the fall, that having loſt all, we ſhould recover all again, by the ſecond Adam, who ſhould be a public perſon, a mediator between him and us; and ſo through Chriſt we ſhould have acceſs and entrance to the Father by him, and that by him we ſhould have boldneſs, and that God again downward might do all things with due ſatisfaction to his juſtice, becauſe we are as ſtubble, and God a conſuming fire; were not Chriſt in the middle, what intercourſe could there be between the Lord and us? no other than between the fire, and the ſtubble, majeſty on his ſide, and

misery and sin on ours; there must be a mediator, to bring these two contraries together. And therefore all is ours, because we are Christ's, and Christ is God's; so all come downward through Christ, from God to us; God doth all in Christ to us, he chooseth us in Christ, and sanctifies us in Christ; he bestows all spiritual blessings on us in Christ; as members of Christ, he conveys all through Christ. To Christ first, he hath put fulness in him, "and of his fulness we receive grace for grace;" for Christ is complete, and in him we are complete.

Now all things come downward from God through Christ, so from us to God upward, "all is ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's;" and therefore we have no intercourse with that great God, who is a consuming fire, if we be to deal with him in himself, but through Christ, and therefore we ask all in Christ's name. "Whatsoever you ask the Father in my name," &c. John xiv. 13, 14.—"and do all in the name of Christ." Col. iii. 17. For it were presumptuous arrogance, and fruitless, if we should go to God in our own name; but we go in the name of Christ, considering that he is the middle that knits God and us together, and therefore, Lord, we come not to thee in our own name, and in our own worth, and in our own desert, which is none at all, we come to thee in the merits of Christ, in the mediation of Christ, in that love thou beareſt him, and that, for his sake, thou beareſt to us, that are his members, that is the way of intercourse between God and us, not to think of God absolutely out of Christ; that is a terrible thought, nothing more terrible than to think of God, out of the mediator, but to think of God in Christ, nothing more sweet; for now the nature of God is lovely, coming to us in Christ, and the majesty and justice of God are lovely, coming to us from Christ.

As the waters of the sea, though they be salt of themselves, when they are strained through the earth are sweet in the rivers, so though the justice of God be a terrible thing, yet when it comes through Christ to be satisfied, it is sweet; for, Lord, thou wilt not punish the same sin twice; and the majesty and greatness of God is comfortable, whatsoever is God's is ours, because Christ is ours. God in his greatness, in his justice, in his power, all things being derived, and passing through Christ, are sweet and comfortable to us: and therefore from excellent wisdom, the apostle inserts the mediator between "all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

DAVID'S

DAVID's CONCLUSION;

OR,

The Saint's Resolution.

IN ONE SERMON.

PSALM lxxiii. 28.

"*But it is good for me to draw near to God.*"

THIS pſalm is a pſalm of Aſaph, or a pſalm of David, and committed to Aſaph the ſinger; for Aſaph was both a ſeer, and a ſinger. Thoſe pſalms that David made, were committed to Aſaph, ſo it is thought to be a pſalm of David; and if not of David, yet of Aſaph, who was likewiſe a ſinger in the houſe of God.

The pſalm repreſents to us a man in a ſpiritual conflict; by a diſcovery of the cauſe of it, and a recovery out of the conflict, with a triumphant concluſion afterwards.

He begins abruptly, as a man newly come out of a conflict—"Truly God is good to Iſrael:" as if he had gained this truth in conflicting with his corruptions, (and ſatan, who joins with corruption in oppoſing:) ſay the fleſh what it can, ſay ſatan what he can, ſay carnal men what they can, yet, "God is good to Iſrael."

2. After this conflict, he ſets down the diſcovery, firſt of his weakneſs, and then of his doubting of God's providence; and then the cauſe of it, the proſperity of the wicked, and God's contrary dealing with the godly; then he diſcovers the danger

he was come to. Ver. 13. "Verily I have cleanſed my heart in vain, and waſhed my hands in innocency," &c.

3. And then the recovery, in verſe 17. "I went into the ſanctuary, and there I underſtood the end of theſe men." The recovery was by going into the ſanctuary; not by looking upon the preſent condition, but upon God's intention, what ſhould become of ſuch men, and there he had ſatisfaction.

4. Then his victory, and triumph over all, ver. 23. "Nevertheleſs I am continually with thee." It was a ſuggeſtion of the fleſh that thou waſt gone far from me, by reaſon of the condition of carnal men that flouriſh in the eye of the world. No: "Thou art continually with me, and thou holdeſt me by my right hand;" thou upholdeſt me, I ſhould fall elſe. But what, would God do ſo for the time to come? "He will guide me by his counſel," while I live here. And when I am dead, what will he do for me after? "He will receive me to glory:" whereupon ſaith he, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in earth that I deſire beſides thee." Therefore, though for the preſent my fleſh fail, yea, and my heart fail; yet, "God is the ſtrength of my heart, and my portion for ever." We ſee here his victory ſet down; and he gives a luſtre to it, by God's contrary dealing with the wicked—"for, lo! they that are far from thee, ſhall periſh: thou haſt deſtroyed all them that go a whoring from thee." Now, in the words of the text, you have this concluſion upon all this, "Nevertheleſs it is good for me to draw near to God."

This is the concluſion upon the former principles; this is, as it were, the judgment upon the former demurs; the ſum of all comes to this: Let all things be weighed, and laid together, I am ſure this is true, "It is good for me to draw near to God." So he ends where he began, "God is good to Iſrael," Therefore becauſe God is good to Iſrael, "it is good to draw near to God." So you ſee in what order the words come: they are the words of a man got out of a conflict after he had entered into the ſanctuary; and after he had conſidered the end of wicked men, at whoſe proſperity he was troubled, and took ſcandal.

Before I come to the words, it is not amiſs briefly to touch theſe points, that I am to deliver.

First, God's deareſt children are exerciſed with ſharp ſpiritual conflicts.

God

God ſuffers their very faith in principles ſometimes to be ſhaken. What is more clear than God's providence? not the noon-day: yet God ſuffers ſometimes his own children to be exerciſed with conflicts in this kind, to doubt of principles written in the book of God, as it were, with a ſun-beam; that have a luſtre in themſelves. There is nothing more clear, than that God hath a particular ſpecial providence over his; yet God's ways are ſo unſearchable and deep, that he doth ſpiritually exerciſe his children; he ſuffers them to be exerciſed, as you ſee here, he comes out of a conflict: "but it is good for me to draw near to God." I will but touch it; therefore I will extend it only to God's people, that (if by reaſon of the remainders of corruption, God ſuffer their rebellious hearts to caſt mire and dirt, to caſt in objections that are odious to the ſpiritual man, that part that is good), they may not be caſt down too much, and dejected. It is no otherwiſe with them, than it hath been with God's dear children; as we ſee in Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and others. It is a clear truth, I only point at it, that we might have it ready, to comfort ourſelves when ſuch things riſe in our ſouls; it is no otherwiſe with us, than it hath been with others of God's dear children.

The ſecond point is, that God's children, when they are in this conflict, recover themſelves.

God ſuffers them to be foiled; but then they recover themſelves. Firſt, there is a conflict, and then often times the foil. A man is foiled by the worſt part in him; and then after a while he recovers; and then, (as in other conflicts), there is triumph and victory: as we ſee here, his conflict and recovery.

For God's children go not far off from him, (as it is in verſe 27. "Lo, they that are far off from thee ſhall periſh)," they may have their thoughts unſettled a little concerning God's providence; but they run not far off, they go not a whoring, as carnal men do. They begin to ſlip, but God hath a bleſſed hand under them, that they do not fall away, that they fall not foully. They may ſlip, and fall a little, to ſtand better, and ſurer after; but they go not far off, as wicked men do: they never ſlip ſo low, but God's goodneſs is lower to hold them up: he hath one hand under them, and another hand above them, embracing them, ſo they cannot fall dangerouſly. This is the ſecond—from this that we ſee here, he recovers out of this conflict.

Uſe.—Which may ſerve to diſcern our eſtate in grace; if we belong to God, though ſuch evil imaginations riſe, yet notwithſtanding there is a contrary principle of grace always in God's children, that checks them, at leaſt afterwards, if not preſently. Such noiſome thoughts as theſe rule and reign in carnal men; for they take ſcandal at God's government, and they judge indeed, that the ways of wicked men are happy: they have falſe principles, and they frame their courſes to ſuch falſe principles and rules; from cheriſhing atheiſtical doubts of God's providence, and the like. It is far otherwiſe with God's children: there are conflicts in them; but there is a recovery, they check them preſently: they have God's ſpirit, and the ſeed of grace in them, which is never extinct.

The way of recovery is to enter into God's ſanctuary: for we muſt not give liberty to ourſelves to languiſh in ſuch a courſe, to look to preſent things too much; but look into God's book, and there we ſhall ſee what is threatened to ſuch and ſuch ill courſes; and what promiſes are made to good courſes: and then apply God's truth to the example. See how God met with wicked men in their boaſting, and advanced his children when they were even at the brink of deſpair. Examples in this kind are pregnant, and clear, throughout the ſcripture. The Lord ſaith, "It ſhall go well with the righteous;" and it ſhall not go well with the wicked, let him eſcape a thouſand times. "Doubtleſs there is a reward for the godly." Let us look in the book of God, upon the predictions, and ſee the verifying of thoſe predictions in the examples that act the rules, and bring them to the view—let us ſee the truths in the examples. This entering into God's ſanctuary, it is the way to free us from dangerous ſcandals, and to overcome dangerous conflicts: for the concluſions of the ſanctuary are clean contrary to ſenſe and carnal reaſon. Carnal reaſon ſaith, Such a one is a happy man, ſure he is in great favour, God loves him: O, but the ſanctuary ſaith, It ſhall never go well with ſuch a man. Carnal reaſon would ſay of Dives, O, a happy man: but the ſanctuary ſaith, He had his good here, and Lazarus had his ill here. Carnal reaſon ſaith, Is there any providence that rules in the earth? is there a God in heaven, that ſuffers theſe things to go ſo confuſedly? ay, but the word of God, the ſanctuary ſaith, there is a providence that rules all things ſweetly, and that all things are beautiful in their time.

We

We muſt not look upon things in their confuſion, but knit things. "Mark the end, mark the end of the righteous man," Pſal. xxxvii. Look upon Joſeph in priſon, here is a horrible ſcandal; for where was God's providence to watch over a poor young man: but ſee him after, the ſecond man in the kingdom. Look on Lazarus at the rich man's door, and there is ſcandal: but ſee him after in Abraham's boſom. If we ſee Chriſt arraigned before Pilate, and crucified on the croſs; here is a ſcandal, that innocency itſelf ſhould be wronged: but ſtay a while, ſee him at the right hand of God, ruling principalities and powers, ſubjecting all things under his feet.

Thus the ſanctuary teacheth us to knit one thing to another, and not brokenly to look upon things preſent, according to the dreams of men's devices; but to look upon the cataſtrophe, and winding up of the tragedy. Not to look on the preſent conflict, but to go to the ſanctuary, and ſee the end of all; ſee how God directs all things to a ſweet end. "All the ways of God (to his children) are mercy and truth," though they ſeem never ſo full of anger and diſpleaſure. Thus you ſee God's children are in conflict oft times, and ſometimes they are foiled in the conflict; yet by way of recovery they go into the ſanctuary, and there they have ſpiritual eye-ſalve; they have another manner of judgment of things, than fleſh and blood hath.

Again, we ſee, when he went into the ſanctuary, the very ſight of faith makes him draw near to God. Sometimes God repreſents heavenly truths to the eye of ſenſe, in the examples of his juſtice." We ſee ſometimes wicked men brought upon the ſtage: God bleſſeth ſuch a ſight of faith, and ſuch examples, to bring his children nearer to him: as we ſee immediately before the text—"thou wilt deſtroy all that go a whoring from thee; and then it follows, "it is good for me to draw near to God." So that the ſpirit of God in us, and our ſpirits ſanctified by the ſpirit, takes advantage when we enter into the ſanctuary, (and ſees the divers ends of good and bad), to draw us cloſe to God.

Indeed that is one reaſon why God ſuffers different conditions of men to be in the world, not ſo much to ſhew his juſtice towards the wicked, as that his children ſeeing of his juſtice, and his mercy, and the manifeſtation and diſcovery of his providence, in ordering his juſtice towards wicked men, it may make them cleave to his mercy more, and give a luſtre to his mercy.

mercy. "It is good for me to cleave to the Lord," I ſee what will become of all others.

The next thing that follows upon this; that God's children thus conflicting, and going into the ſanctuary, and ſeeing the end of all there, "they go a contrary courſe to the world;" they ſwim againſt the ſtream. As we ſay of the ſtars and planets, they have a motion of their own, contrary to that rapt motion whereby they are carried, and whirled about in four and twenty hours, from eaſt to weſt; they have a creeping motion and period of their own; as the moon hath a motion of her own, backward from weſt to eaſt, that makes every month; and the ſun hath a diſtinct motion he is carried with, that he goes about in a year. So God's children they live and converſe, and are carried with the ſame motion as the world is: they live among men, and converſe as men do; but notwithſtanding they have a contrary motion of their own, which they are directed and carried to by the ſpirit of God; as here the holy prophet ſaith, "It is good for me to draw near to God." As if he ſhould ſay, for other men, be they great or ſmall, be they of what condition they will, let them take what courſe they will, and let them ſee how they can juſtify their courſe, and take what benefit they can; let them reap as they ſow. I do not matter much what courſe they take, I will look to myſelf; as for me, I am ſure this is my beſt courſe, to draw near to God.

So the ſanctified ſpirit of a holy man; he looks not to the ſtream of the times, what be the currents and opinions, and courſes of riſing to preferment, of getting riches, of attaining to an imaginary preſent happineſs here; but he hath another judgment of things, and therefore goes contrary to the world's courſe. Hear St Paul, Philip. iii. "All men ſeek their own, I cannot ſpeak of it without weeping; whoſe end is damnation, whoſe belly is their God, who mind earthly things." But what doth St Paul, when other men ſeek their own, and are carried after private ends? Oh, ſaith he, "Our converſation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, who ſhall change our vile bodies, and make them like his glorious body; according to his mighty power, whereby he is able to ſubdue all things to himſelf." So you ſee the bleſſed apoſtle, (led with the ſame ſpirit as the man of God here), he fetcheth not the rules of his life from the example of the great ones of the world, or from the multitude—theſe are falſe deceiving rules; but he fetcheth the rule

rule of his life from the experimental goodneſs he had found by a contrary courſe to the world. Let the world take what courſe they will, "it is good for me to draw near to God."

I might add a little further, that the courſe and corrupt principles of the world, are ſo far from ſhaking a child of God, that they ſettle him. They ſtir up his zeal the more. As we ſay, there is an antiperiſtaſis, an increaſing of contraries by contraries; as we ſee in winter, the body is warmer, by reaſon that heat is kept in, and ſprings are warmer in winter becauſe the heat is kept in. So the ſpirit of God in the hearts of his children works and boils when it is environed with contraries; it gathers ſtrength, and breaks out with more zeal, as David, Pſal. cxix. when he ſaw men did not keep God's law, he complains to God, "It is time, Lord, for thee to work." Indeed it is the nature of oppoſition to increaſe the contrary; thoſe that have the ſpirit, and grace of God in truth, they gather ſtrength by oppoſition.

Therefore the uſe we are to make of it, is to diſcern ourſelves, of what ſpirit we are, what principles we lead our lives by, whether by examples of greatneſs, or multitude, or ſuch like, it is an argument we are led by the ſpirit of the world, and not by the ſpirit of God. God's children, as they are ſevered from the world in condition, (they are men of another world), ſo they are ſevered from the world in diſpoſition, in their courſe and converſation; therefore from thoſe grounds their courſe is contrary to the world. "But it is good for me;" the word "but," is not in the original; it is, "and it is good for me;" but the other is aimed at: the ſenſe is, "But it is good for me to draw near to God," and ſo it is in the laſt tranſlation. Thus you ſee what way we have made to the words. I do but touch theſe things, and it was neceſſary to ſay ſomething of them; becauſe the words are a triumphant concluſion upon the former premiſes.

And in the words, in general, obſerve this firſt of all, that God by his ſpirit enableth his children to juſtify wiſdom by their own experience.

To make it good by their own experience, "It is good for me to draw near to God." And this is one reaſon why God ſuffers them to be ſhaken, and then in conflict to recover, that after recovery they may juſtify the truth; nothing is ſo certain as that which is certain after doubting; nothing

thing is ſo fixed as that which is fixed after it hath been ſhaken; as the trees have the ſtrongeſt roots, becauſe they are moſt ſhaken with winds, and tempeſts. Now God ſuffers the underſtanding, that is, the inward man, of the beſt men to be ſhaken, and after ſettles them; that ſo they may even from experience juſtify all truths: that they may ſay, it is naught, it is a bitter thing to ſin: Satan hath abuſed me, and my own luſt abuſed me, and enticed me away from God: but I ſee no ſuch good thing in ſin as nature perſuaded me before. As travellers tell men, you live poorly here; in ſuch a country you may do wondrous well, there you ſhall have plenty and reſpect; and when they come there, and are pinched with hunger and diſreſpect, they come home with ſhame enough to themſelves, that they were ſo beguiled. So it is with God's children: ſometimes he ſuffers them to be foiled, and lets them have the reins of their luſts a while, to taſte a little of the forbidden tree; that after they may ſay with experience, It is a bitter thing to forſake God, it is better to go to my former husband, as the church ſaith in Hoſea, when God took her in hand a little—ſin will be bitter at the laſt. So the prodigal, he was ſuffered to range, till he was whipped a while; and then he could confeſs it was better to be in his father's houſe. God ſuffers his children to fall fall into ſome courſe of ſin, that afterward by experience they may juſtify good things, and be able to ſay that God is good.

And the judgment of ſuch is more firm, and doth more good than thoſe who have been kept from ſinking at all. God, in his wiſe providence, ſuffers this.

Uſe.—We ſhould labour therefore to juſtify in our own experience all that is good. What is the reaſon that men are aſhamed of good courſes ſo ſoon? It may be they are perſuaded a little to pray, and to ſanctify the Lord's day, to retire themſelves from vanity, and ſuch like: ay, but if their judgments be not ſettled out of the book of God, and if they have not ſome experience, they will not maintain this, therefore they are driven off. Now a chriſtian ſhould be able to juſtify againſt all gainſayers, whatſoever can be ſaid by his own experience. That to read the book of God, and to hear holy truths opened by men having the ſpirit of God, it is a good thing: I find good by it by experience. That where there is the communion of ſaints, holy conference, &c. I can juſtify it, if there were no ſcripture for it: I find it by experience to be a bleſſed way to bring

bring me to a heavenly temper, to fit me for heaven. So there is no good courſe, but God's children ſhould be able, both by ſcripture, and likewiſe by their own experience, to anſwer all gainſayers: when either their own hearts, or others ſhall oppoſe it, he may be able to ſay, with the holy man here, it is no matter what you ſay; "It is good for me to draw near to God." So much for the general. To come more particularly to the words.

It is good for me to draw near to God.

Here you have the juſtification of piety, of holy courſes, which is ſet down by drawing near to God. And the argument whereby it is juſtified, "it is good." This gloſs put upon any thing, commends it to man: for naturally ſince the fall there is ſo much left in man that he draws to that which is good: but when he comes to particulars, there is the error; he ſeeks heaven in the way of hell, he ſeeks happineſs in the way of miſery, he ſeeks light in the way of darkneſs, and life in the way and path of death; his luſts ſo hurry him, and carry him the contrary way: but yet there is left this general foundation of religion in all men; as the heathen could ſay, naturally all men from the principles of nature draw to that which is good. Here religious courſes are juſtified and commended, from that which hath the beſt attractive, and moſt magnetical force." "It is good to draw near to God." Good hath a drawing force; for the underſtanding, that ſhews and diſcovers, but the will is the chief guide in man; and, anſwerable to the diſcovery of good or ill in the underſtanding, there is a proſecution or averſion in the will, which is that part in the ſoul of man which cleaves to good diſcovered. To unfold the words a little.

1. "It is good."—To draw near to God, who is the chief good. It is good in quality, and good in condition, and ſtate. It is good in quality and diſpoſition: for it is the good of conformity for the underſtanding creature to draw near to God. The nearer any thing is to the principle of ſuch a thing, the better it is for it: the nearer to the ſun, the more light; the nearer to the fire, the more heat; the nearer to that which is goodneſs itſelf, the more good; the nearer to happineſs, the more happy; therefore it muſt needs be the happineſs of condition to draw near to God. So you ſee what is meant, when he ſaith here, "it is good:" It is a pleaſing good, conformable to God's will, he commends it: and it is for my good likewiſe, it advanceth my condition to draw near to God.

2.

"To draw near." What it is to draw near to God, we shall see by what it is to go from God. God is everywhere, we are always near to God. "Whither shall I go from thy presence? If I go to hell, thou art there," &c. saith the Psalmist. God is everywhere indeed in regard of his presence, and power, and disposing providence; but then there is a gracious presence of God in the hearts of his children. And there is a strange presence of God to Christ, the presence of union; which makes the human nature of Christ the happiest creature that ever was, being joined by a hypostatical union to the second person; but we speak not of that nearness here. There is a gracious nearness, when the spirit of God, in the spirits of those that belong to God, sweetly enlargeth and comforts, and supports, and strengtheneth them, working that in them that he works in the hearts of none else. For instance, the soul is in the whole man, it is diffused over all the members; it is in the foot, in the eye, in the heart, in the brain. But how is it in all these? It is in the foot as it moves it, it is in the heart as the principle of life, it is in the brain and understanding, using and exercising his reasoning understanding power; so that though all the soul be in the whole man, yet it is otherwise in the brain than in the rest. So, though God be everywhere, yet he is otherwise in his children than in others: he is in them graciously and comfortably, exercising his graces, and comforting them; he is not so with the rest of the world. You see how God is present everywhere, and how he is graciously present with his. So answerably we are said to be near to God, (we are near him in what state soever we are); but then there is a gracious nearness, when our whole soul is near to God, as thus: 1. When our understandings conceive aright of God, as it is said of the young man in the gospel, when he began to speak discreetly and judiciously, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God:" when men have a right conceit of divine truths, they are not far from the kingdom of God, when there is a clearness of judgment to conceive aright.

2. Then again there is a nearness, when we not only know things aright, but mind them; when the things are present to our minds, when God is in our thoughts. David saith of the wicked man, "God is not in his thoughts." When we mind, and think of God, and heavenly things, they are near to us, and we to them: For the soul is a spiritual essence, it goes everywhere, it goes to heaven, and is present with the things it minds.

We

We are near to God, and heavenly things, when we mind them, and think on, and feed our thoughts with them.

3. Again, we are near them, when our wills first make choice of the better part with Mary; when, upon discovery of the understanding, the will chuseth deliberately: upon consideration follows the determination, and chusing of the will; and upon choice, cleaving, which is another act of the will; when it chuseth that which is spiritually best, every way best for grace and condition, and then it cleaves to it. As it is said of Jonathan, "his heart did cleave to David:" so the woman cleaves to her husband, as St Paul speaks: when the will chooseth, and cleaves to that which is good, then there is a drawing near.

4. And likewise when the affections are carried to God as their object, then there is a drawing near to God, when our love embraceth God, and heavenly things: for love is an affection of union, it makes the thing loved, and he that loveth, to be one: it is the primary, the first-born affection of the soul, from which all other affections are bred; when we love God, we desire still further and further communion with him. And where there is love, if we have not what we love, then the soul goes forth to God in desire of heavenly things; "the heart pants after God, as the hart doth after the rivers of waters," and after holy things, wherein the spirit of God is effectual.—And when we have it in any measure, then the soul shews a sweet enlargement of joy and delight in God. Thus when we judge aright of, and mind heavenly things, and make choice of them, and cleave to God with all our affections of love, and joy, and delight, when these are carried to God, and heavenly things, then we draw near to him.

And especially when the inward man is touched with the spirit of God, even as the iron is touched with the load-stone, tho' it be heavy of itself, it will go up: when the inward man is touched by the spirit of God, with a spirit of faith, which is a grace by which we draw near to God with trust: for it is confidence and trust that draws us near to God. Faith is wrought in the whole inward man, in the understanding, in the mind, in chooſing, and cleaving: but especially it is in the will, for faith is described to be a going to God, a coming to him, which is a promotion, or going forth, which is an act of the will, so by faith and trust, spe-

cially

cially we draw near to God. Even as at the firſt, we fell from God, by diſtruſting of his word; ſaith the devil, Ye ſhall not die at all; we believed a liar more than God himſelf. Now we are recovered by a way contrary to that we fell; we muſt recover, and draw near to God again by truſting and relying upon him. You ſee what is meant by the words, "It is good for me to draw near to God."

To come to obſerve ſome things from them:

1. Spiritual conviction of the judgement, is the ground of practice.

It is good, and good for me; for we know in nature that the will follows the laſt deſign of the underſtanding; that which the underſtanding ſaith is to be done here, and now all circumſtances conſidered, it is beſt, that the will chuſeth, and that a man doth: for the will rules, and leads the outward man. Now where there is a heavenly conviction of the underſtanding of any particular thing, this at this time is good, all things conſidered, and weighed in the balance, on the one ſide, and on the other; where this is, there comes in practice, and drawing near to God always. Conviction is, when a man is ſet down, ſo that he cannot gainſay nor will not, but falls to practice preſently; then a man is convinced of a thing. That which is immediately before practice, and leads to practice, it is conviction; now there are theſe four things in conviction.

There is firſt truth; a man muſt know that ſuch a thing is true. Then it muſt not only be a truth, but a good truth; as the goſpel is ſaid to be "the good word of God," and "it is a true and a faithful ſaying." It is a true ſaying, "that Chriſt came to ſave ſinners;" and it is a faithful, a good ſaying. If it be not good as well as true, truth doth not draw to practice as it is truth, but as it is good.

As it muſt be truth, a good truth, ſo it muſt be good for me; "It is good for me," &c. A thing may be good for another man; the devil knows what is good, and that makes him envy poor chriſtians ſo. Wicked men know that which is good, when they ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt; but for them it is better to keep in the contrary: ſo that we muſt know it is a truth, and a good truth, and good for us in particular, that it is beſt for us to do ſo.

The

The fourth is this: though it be true and good, and good for us, yet before we can come to practice, it muſt be a good that is comparative, better than other things that are preſented, or elſe no action will follow. A man muſt be able to ſay, this is better than that. A weak man that is led with paſſions, and luſts, he oftentimes ſees the truth of things, and ſays they are good, and good for me, and wiſhes that he could take ſuch a courſe; but ſuch is the ſtrength of his paſſions at this time, that it is better to do thus, it is better to yield to his luſts, and he truſts that God will be merciful, and he ſhall recover it afterwards. Theſe four things therefore, muſt be in conviction, before we can take the beſt courſe; and theſe are all here in this holy man: for he ſaw it was a truth, a duty, and likewiſe that it was a good truth; for to be near to God, the fountain of good, it muſt needs be good: and then it was good for him to be ſo, nay, it was good, all things conſidered; for it is a concluſion, as it were, brought out of the fire. out of a conflict; nay, ſay the fleſh, and ſay all the world what it can to the contrary, "It is good for me to draw near to God," he brings it in as a triumphant concluſion. Put drawing near to God in one balance, and lay in that balance all the inconveniences that may follow drawing near to God; the diſpleaſure of great ones, the loſs of any earthly advantage; and lay in the other balance all the advantages that keep men from drawing near to God: as if a man do not keep a good conſcience, he may pleaſe this or that man, he may get riches and advance himſelf, and better his eſtate; conſider all that can be, yet notwithſtanding, it is better to draw near to God, with all the diſadvantages that follow that courſe, than to take the contrary. Thus you ſee the truth clear, that conviction is the way, and the foundation of practice.

Therefore we ſhould labour by all means to be convinced of the beſt things. It is not ſufficient to have a general notion, and ſlightly to hear of good things: no, we muſt beg the ſpirit of God, that he would ſeal, and ſet them upon our ſouls; and ſo ſtrongly ſet and ſeal them there, that when other things are preſented to the contrary, with all the advantages, and colours, and gloſſes, that fleſh and blood can ſet upon them; yet, out of the ſtrength of ſpiritual judgment we may be able to judge of the beſt things out of a ſpiritual conviction; and to ſay, it is beſt to cleave to God. So ſaid the bleſſed man of God, Moſes; there was in the one end of the balance, the pleaſures of ſin,

the honours of a court, there was all that earth could afford: for, if it be not to be had in a prince's court, where is it to be had? his place was more than ordinary, he was accounted the ſon of Pharaoh's daughter: yet lay all that in the balance; and in the other part of the balance, to draw near to God's people; tho' the people of God were a baſe, forlorn, deſpiſed, afflicted people, at that time; yet notwithſtanding to draw near to the cauſe of religion, the diſgraced cauſe of religion, to draw near to God, when he is diſgraced in the world, (it is eaſy to draw near to God when there is no oppoſition), but to draw near to God's part and ſide, when it is diſgraced in the world, Moſes ſaw it the beſt end of the balance, put in the afflictions of God's people, or what you will. So it was with Abraham, when he followed God, as it were, blind-fold, and left all, his father's houſe, and the contentment he had there. So it was with our Saviour's diſciples, they left all to follow Chriſt: they were convinced of this; ſurely we ſhall get more good by the company of Chriſt, than by thoſe things that we leave for him.

Let us labour therefore to be convinced of the excellency of ſpiritual things, and thereupon ſpiritual practice will follow. And undoubtedly the reaſon of the profane converſation of the world, it comes from hidden atheiſm, that men make no better choice than they do, that they draw not near to God; let them ſay what they will, it proceeds from hence. I prove it thus: when men are convinced of good things, they will do good; for conviction is the ground of practice; and when men do not take good courſes, it is becauſe they are not convinced of the beſt things. Therefore men that ſwear, and blaſpheme, that are carnal brutiſh perſons, at that time atheiſm rules in their hearts, that they believe not theſe things in the book of God to be true. Can the ſwearer believe that "God will not hold him guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain:" that a curſe ſhall follow the ſwearer? and the whoremonger, "that whoremongers and adulterers God will judge?" and ſo the covetous and extortioners, (they that raiſe themſelves by ill means) "ſhall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Can men believe this, and live in the practice of theſe ſins? if they did believe theſe things indeed, as the word of God ſets them down, if they did believe that ſin were ſo bitter and ſo foul a thing as the word of God makes it, certainly they would not: therefore it comes from a hidden atheiſm. Indeed there is much atheiſm and infidelity

lity in the heart of man, and we cannot bewail it too much; in the beſt there are ſome remainders of it: as this holy man, "ſo fooliſh was I, and as a beaſt before thee," when he thought of his doubting of God's providence. Therefore conſidering that the cauſe of all ill practice is, that we are not ſpiritually convinced of the contrary, that ſin is a naughty and bitter thing; nor are we ſufficiently convinced of the beſt things, let us labour more and more to be ſoundly convinced of theſe things.

Now, nothing will do this but the Holy Ghoſt, as ye have it, John xvi. "Chriſt promiſeth to ſend the comforter, the Holy Ghoſt, and he ſhall convince the world of ſin:" that is, he ſhall ſo ſet ſin before the eyes of men's ſouls, that they ſhall know there is no ſalvation but in Chriſt; he ſhall convince them of unbelief, that horrible ſin; they ſhall have it preſented ſo to them, that they ſhall believe preſently upon it. This the Holy Ghoſt muſt do.

But the Holy Ghoſt doth it in the uſe of means; therefore it muſt be our wiſdom, to hear, and pray, and meditate much, that God would vouchſafe his ſpirit to perſuade us, to convince our underſtanding, to convince us of all our falſe reaſonings againſt good things; that there may not a vile imagination riſe in our hearts contrary to divine principles.

"It is good to draw near to God:" therefore it is good to come to the ſacrament, which is one way of drawing near to God. Let us be ſo convinced of it, that it is not only a neceſſary, but a comfortable, and a ſweet duty to have communion with God: for will we ſuffer for Chriſt, if we will not feaſt with him? What ſhall we ſay of thoſe, therefore, that are ſo far from drawing near to God, when they have theſe opportunities, that they turn their backs? They thwart this bleſſed man here, he ſaith, "It is good for me to draw near to God;" nay, ſay they, it is good for me to have nothing to do with God, nor Chriſt, no, not when he comes to allure me. Now he is come near us indeed, that we might come near him: becauſe we were ſtrangers to God, and could not draw near to him ſimply conſidered God became man, Immanuel, God with us, that he might bring us to God. Chriſt is that Jacob's ladder that knits heaven and earth together; Chriſt, God and man, knits God and man together: this was the end of his incarnation, and of his death, to make our peace, to bring thoſe near that have been ſtrangers, nay, enemies before,

fore, and of our part and portion in the benefit of his death, we are aſſured in the ſacrament. Therefore let us draw near to our comfort, with thankfulneſs for his goodneſs that we have theſe opportunities. Let us draw near to God, to have our faith ſtrengthened, and our communion with him increaſed.

Only let us labour to come with clean hearts. God will be ſanctified in all that come near him. Let us know that we have to deal with a holy God, and with holy things, and therefore caſt aſide a purpoſe of living in ſin, let us not come with defiled hearts: for then, though the things be holy in themſelves, they are defiled with us; let us come with a reſolution to renew our covenant, and come with rejoicing that God ſtoops ſo low to uſe theſe poor helps, that in themſelves are weak, yet by his bleſſing they are able greatly to ſtrengthen our faith.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

Printed by J. Chalmers & Co. Aberdeen.